

**Television as a Shared Space in the Intercultural Lives  
of Primary Aged Children**

**Liesbeth de Block**

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University of London

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## ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of the ways in which primary aged refugee and migrant children use television and TV talk with their friends and family in processing and building their social worlds and in the formation of their identities. The study focuses on a small number of children from diverse backgrounds who are part of the same friendship groups. The ethnographically styled fieldwork (including visual ethnography) was carried out in a Primary school in North London. The data includes observations in the playground, the classrooms, in the children's homes and out and about in the neighbourhood. Interviews were conducted with children, teachers and parents and media activities and video productions formed an important part of the data collection and analysis. This is, therefore, an in depth study of particular children in a particular time aimed at gaining a detailed understanding of the workings of television in their lives.

The data and analysis show that television acted as an important shared space where little else beyond school was shared and where continuity of place and relationships was fragmented or fragile. Television knowledge served as a symbolic resource that these children learned to negotiate, helping them to make sense of the world and their place in it. However, at the same time TV talk was also a place in which these children learned what was not acceptable with their peers and the wider society. They often censored the most important aspects of their home lives from everyday social interactions outside the home. Thus, while acting to facilitate inclusion it was also a powerful force for conformity and for excluding what was different. The families in my study used satellite and cable television to maintain contact with their countries of origin and to build new relationships within the diasporic community internationally. The children, therefore, had to negotiate not only the formation of new identities but, in a way not envisaged before global media, simultaneous multiple affiliations and identities. News media also had a particular importance for the refugee and migrant families in my study. For those children who had experienced conflict it triggered strong feelings of insecurity. Talking with their peers allowed them to relate their experiences to those of others and for them to understand that they were not alone.

While children living with two or more cultures are often seen as disadvantaged this study presents a different picture. In contemporary society where economics, communication and everyday life require the ability to move across cultural boundaries it raises the question as to how we are supporting children in maintaining and developing intercultural communication and skills that will equip them to participate fully in society. This has implications for research, curriculum and the training of teachers and school support staff.

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## PREFACE

Several images and memories played in my mind when I formulated the initial ideas and outline for this study several years ago. During the Gulf War a six year old boy who was born and who lives in this country and whose parents come from Sylhet in Bangladesh, questioned me about my global and religious alliances. He stated his firm support of Iraq and compared the different news broadcasts he watched every night on TV. A middle class Somali mother, now living in poor temporary housing as an asylum seeker in London, who, at the age of 16, left Mogadishu as part of the national literacy campaign to teach literacy skills in a rural village and who told me that The Simpsons and Cartoon Network had been a useful continuity for her children when they moved from Somalia, to Kenya to London. A 10 year old Kurdish girl, recently arrived in this country that said she watched English TV so she could learn English and know what her friends were talking about but spent a lot of time with her neighbours who had Turkish TV.

For several years I worked as a language support teacher at a Primary School in the Kings Cross area of London and it is here that the fieldwork for this study is situated. The school is housed in a large red brick Victorian building with three floors typical of many inner city schools. There is a stable core of staff. The Head and Deputy, two other senior teachers, many of the playground supervisors as well as the school manager have worked at the school for many years, but other staff tend to be young newly qualified teachers who move on after a year or two. There are approximately 350 children on roll with a large number of children who speak languages other than English at home. The majority of the families have lived in the area for a long time but there is a substantial number of migrant and refugee families who are in temporary housing or who have recently been moved to the area. The demographic composition of the area has changed over the years. When I first started to work at the school in the early 1990s the two main groups were white, long established Londoners and second generation immigrants from Bangladesh. This has been changing and there are now children from every continent. Over thirty languages are

represented. At the time of the study the larger language groups were Bangladesh, Somali and Kurdish/Turkish but this will have changed again with the different flows of people arriving in the UK.

Kings Cross is a very deprived area with a serious drug and related crime and prostitution problem. Much of the housing is of poor quality and there are few facilities for children. Many of the children in the school were not allowed to play out because of the dangers and their lives were restricted to school and home. Many of the families experience serious social and emotional problems and the school is often necessarily involved in trying to resolve these. This often spills over into difficult behaviour in the school. The school works hard to enrich the children's experience through promoting an open and encouraging attitude to extracurricular activities, visitors, outings and volunteer helper schemes. There is an emphasis in school policy of trying to involve parents in the life of the school. For example, towards the end of the fieldwork, after several years of lobbying and fundraising, the caretaker's house was converted into a parents house with classes and activities for parents.

Meanwhile Kings Cross is changing. The Channel Tunnel Rail link is being constructed and large amounts of money are being injected into the area. During the fieldwork several luxury canal side warehouse conversions were coming onto the market and a new image of the area was being promoted. The stark economic contrasts seen in other parts of London are becoming apparent. The children arriving are also changing and adapting to their new circumstances. However, at the same time the children in their classes are having to adapt both to their arrival and also to the increasingly global world in which they live, reflected both in the media they use and in the immediate, physical, economic and cultural environment in which they live. The children who are newly arrived are refugees and migrants, the children who they meet on arrival are 'local' but all of them are making changes, learning new ways and measuring their differences against each other.

The words 'migrant' and 'refugee' are core terms that reappear throughout this study and whose meanings are contested. Scanning different dictionaries at random there is a shifting

emphasis in the definition of 'migrant' between a 1946 and a 1984 edition from animals that migrate to people who migrate. This shift is telling but not useful in today's context. There is no indication of the many different types of human migration and migrant that we now encounter every day. As a marker of our changing times I suspect that definitions of migration will become more specific in future editions. The families whose children attend the school have moved for many different reasons. The dictionary definition of 'refugee' has also shifted. The stress is less on religious persecution and more on war, political persecution or natural disaster. The definition given by the United Nations Convention Relating to Refugees in 1951 is still the one that is most widely accepted (although as we shall see it also is undergoing reinterpretation) and is the one I am working with:

(any person who)... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence... is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it ...

(1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees)

However, the definitions themselves may not reflect the lived realities and the current political climate. We are left, for example, with the different political nuances of the phrase 'asylum seeker', once a term used to describe an objective legal status and now a term of public abuse and political point scoring, implying liar, cheat and sponger.

These changing dictionary definitions suggest some of the continuing legal, political and cultural uncertainties that characterise the lives of many of the children in my study. I have struggled with these unsatisfactory terms but at the end of the day have chosen to work with the individual realities of the particular children and families and to avoid too many generalised and essentialised terms.

The changing meanings of these terms are also reflected in my own life and friendships. Most of my friends can be termed migrant, but each holds a different experience of that

term. With free borders within Europe, a Spanish friend is allowed to work and study here although she will return to her birthplace in a few years. She defines herself as a migrant, a cultural migrant. Another friend, a Caribbean man, who has been here since childhood when he joined his parents, migrant workers who never returned, and who himself returns to his birthplace only on holiday, describes himself as Jamaican, British, Black British, Caribbean depending on the social and political context. Yet another, the grandson of Jewish refugees describes himself as English. I, myself, am the child of Dutch parents who migrated to South Africa and then became exiles in England, a second 'new' country. Now 'naturalised' as a British citizen I still remember the regular checking in at the police station as 'aliens' and often find it hard to know how to define myself. I have been settled here a long time and am therefore not migrant in any legal or political sense, but part of me still feels that I don't belong and therefore am migrant yet with no other base to return to. However, at the same time, I have grown roots here and feel part of a certain English tradition that welcomed me and others – a tradition which is worth preserving.

The children that form the centre of this study are also negotiating their places 'here' and 'there'. They are shaped by the social, economic and psychological factors that form a globalising culture. Their status as 'migrant', 'refugee' or 'local' (those whose families have lived in the locality for several generations) is culturally formed, shifting with historical developments and political imperatives. Media, as a player in all aspects of this, both offer them a window on this world and offer me, as the researcher, a window on how they engage with it. The dynamic processes that operate between institutions, texts, social worlds and individual readers has occupied much debate within Cultural Studies (Johnson, 1986). It is this dynamic that forms the background to my exploration of these particular children's media uses in the formation and negotiation of their social worlds and identities.

## **INTRODUCTION TO PART 1**

The first five chapters of this study explore the theoretical framework and academic disciplines that have informed my thinking, data collection and analysis. In Chapter 1 I discuss aspects of globalisation, the changing media environment and ways of conceptualising the relationship between the local and the global. The main issue here is to develop an understanding of the ways in which these changes impact on migrant and refugee children's lives and their sense of place, home and identity. Developing this strand, Chapter 2 looks more specifically at three areas of debate that highlight the tensions at different stages of migration: leaving, arriving and settling. Discussions about diaspora focus on the linking of past with present lives. Looking at the ways in which migrants, refugees and migration are represented in the media brings us to the concrete experiences of the meeting of host and immigrant. Considerations of identity, representation and new ethnicities address core issues of belonging. Chapter 3 then moves on to study concepts of childhood and the relationship between children and media, specifically television in forming social identities. Chapter 4 aims to bring several issues from previous chapters together in looking at studies of minority ethnic uses of media and the ways in which they are important for the development of a sense of place, location and identity. Chapter 5 then pulls together the main themes raised in these discussions and locates some of the gaps that my research questions address.

**Introduction**

In this chapter I will be looking at some of the theoretical debates in the areas of globalisation, migration and media that informed my thinking during the data collection and analysis of the empirical part of my study. I focus on the local-global nexus as it might affect the everyday lives of the children in my research. The sections are organised as follows. I start by briefly outlining the structural changes in the media that globalisation has brought and that are central to globalisation itself. I go on to outline the ways in which movements of people have changed and in what ways these changes are characteristic of globalisation. This leads us to consider the new globalised relationships between the local and the global (or the periphery and the centre) and how they are theoretically conceptualised. We come then to some of the central questions in globalisation theory: to what extent is globalisation a force for the homogenisation of culture and to what extent does it depend on and allow expressions of difference? Finally I raise the question of agency and some of the consequences of globalisation for the local public sphere. All of these debates will recur in later chapters in different ways but here I attempt to set them apart to build one pillar of the theoretical scaffolding within which my study is located.

**(i) A changing media environment**

In its early days television was seen as a national project. In the UK, watching the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953 on the neighbours' newly acquired television set is an early memory for many. Early discussions of television stress its importance for national bonding and national identity formation (Schlesinger, 1987; Morley and Robins, 1995). Television broadcasting was a national institution that could be used for the public good. One of the reasons for this was scarce wave band availability, thus making broadcast possibilities a rare public resource to be allocated and retained within Government powers. With technological developments this changed and there was growing demand for commercial media expansion, in turn forcing Governments to relinquish some of their hold. More recently these



technological developments have accelerated the globalisation of the media. The 1980s saw radical changes both in economic globalisation but also in the structures of media ownership. Different media converged, facilitating cheaper distribution, production and circulation. This, alongside the rise of satellite and cable, forced national Governments to deregulate or re-regulate (Barker, 1997; Murdock, 1990) so that transnational media became a reality of daily life. While local public television continues to exist, the media can no longer be considered only as a national or local resource. The same programmes can be seen worldwide and the same products advertised but in different time frames and configurations, alongside local productions (Morley and Robins, 1995). With a greater regionalism there is more demand for local specialised media. As this implies we now have both the increase in globalised media as well as an increased demand for locally relevant programming.

The nation state and state broadcasting no longer have the same power to define us and inform us and in some senses limit our cultural connections. Television and, more recently, new media technologies, have meant that we all have virtual access to far away places. Community life is no longer contained within physical boundaries and slow communications but is dominated by global transactions and multinational companies. This has important implications for our cultural and political points of reference. The issue here, however, is not so much the fact of media globalisation, as the impact of these technological and economic changes in terms of audiences' uses and experiences of media. What is important are the implications that this has on the uses to which people put the media, the ways in which they experience them and what their symbolic values are in the context of cultural interaction and the formation of a sense of place and belonging.

## **(ii) Changing patterns of travel and location**

Migration is not new. Trade and economic transactions involving capital and labour have always been an integral part of international human relations and politics. One of the central debates about globalisation is to what extent new patterns of trade and migration are part of a natural progression from the nation state and imperialist trade and cultural patterns (Robertson, 1992) or to what extent they represent a new and distinct phase (Giddens, 1990).

Others have argued that while nation state imperialism is different from globalisation in its forms, its effects on the majority of people in poorer countries or indeed for the poor in the richer nations remain the same (Massey, 1991). Pieterse (2000) explains the difference while emphasising that for many of the South the levels of frustration and powerlessness continue. For him it is the balance of power that is crucial:

... imperialism was territorial, state driven, centrally orchestrated and marked by a clear division between coloniser and colonized; and none of these features apply to contemporary globalization. Contemporary accelerated globalization is multidimensional, non-territorial, polycentric, and the lines of inclusion/exclusion are blurred and run between the middle classes and the poor, North and South. Imperialism was multidimensional but ultimately driven by a single-minded intentionality. Unlike imperialism, globalization involves multiple intentionalities and criss-crossing projects on the part of many agents.

(ibid:132)

The importance of this for my purposes is that the change from the linear two directional flows characteristic of colonial relations to the multidirectional flows that characterise globalisation has implications for patterns of travel and migration. It also has implications for the ways in which we develop our foci of location and identity.

Hannerz (1996) celebrates the rise of what he terms the 'cosmopolitan' and differentiates between the different types of travellers that he claims are building new 'habitats of meaning'. New technologies of travel and communication have brought about increased intellectual, commercial and diplomatic travel. He claims that the resultant transnational cultures are creating new global relations and fields for cultural understanding. This is not limited to one group of people at the centre but, increasingly, to people from both the centre and periphery. Hannerz' view is clearly applicable to some categories of travellers. These people are able to move relatively freely across borders because they possess documentation from one or more states. Ironically, however, their legal 'belonging' to a nation state(s) has less and less personal resonance in their everyday lives.

But this is only one aspect of the increased mobility that globalisation has encouraged. Adelman (1999) argues that the implementation of the nation state was itself a major primary cause of forced migrations. Individuals or groups who were persecuted within one nation state were forced to move to another, often with the protection of international conventions. The resultant tensions between the nation, the state, the globalisation of concepts of individual human rights and a growing population were just about manageable. However, expanding economic globalisation has brought greater migration which alongside increasing numbers of refugees is creating what many would now term a refugee crisis. Many of these people have become stateless and excluded in terms of documentation but still hold strong allegiances to their previous places of residence.

These two views set out the extremes of current experiences of travel, but they usefully raise the question as to what relation migrants and refugees now have with the nation state and to what extent inclusion in a nation's life can still be dependent upon allegiance to one place and one nation. Through increased possibilities of travel and communications migrants often have the potential to keep in touch with 'back home' in more immediate ways than before. They can build continuities between the different places in which they live. The questions are: what do these continuities consist of? What particular localised uses of global and local media have people developed through migration? What are the relationships between our global and local lives?

### **(iii) Local and global**

The question, therefore, of how to conceptualise these changing relations between the local and the global is of central importance. Harvey (1989) uses the phrase 'time-space compression' (since used by many others) to describe the ways in which distance is made to feel shorter by the speed of communications. This in turn speeds up the process of globalisation itself. So a business decision made in London will have immediate consequences in Hong Kong; news events are instantly relayed throughout the world and watched by people who were there yesterday. Again the media and technological developments are significant here.

Giddens (1990) describes the same process as 'time-space distancing'. He argues that with new global relationships society can no longer be seen as 'bounded'. Instead we need to think about social life in terms of the relationship between 'local involvements' in which people are physically co-present and 'interactions across distance'. These 'stretched' social forms and connections are a major characteristic of globalisation in which the media are central players. For example when children in a refugee camp in Kenya or the back streets of Colombia talk about an incident between Homer and Bart in The Simpsons the portrayal of social interactions from far away becomes localised into the co-present friendship relationships between the children.

However despite his recognition of the relationship between local involvements and the connections of distance, Giddens has been criticised for prioritising temporal concerns over spatial (Robertson, 1995). Robertson's concern is to study the ways in which concepts of space and the relationships between spaces have changed. This prioritises the fact that there are now multiple relationships between the local and the global and not simply a linear one-directional flow. Thus he prefers to use the term 'glocalisation' rather than globalisation as he believes that what is referred to as the local is now formed by, and included within, global relations.

Underlying much of this is the concept of 'disembeddedness' that also preoccupies Giddens in his discussions of time-space distancing: "the lifting out of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across time and space" (Giddens 1990:21). Thus, Raymond Williams' (1974) concept of 'mobile privatisation' (the process by which we can be transported to other places but remain within our own private space) is now radically extended. Globalised media transport us over greater differences of time and space to include transnational images, reflections and multiple 'flows' (Giddens, 1990). Morley (2000), in discussing the media's role in time and space relations links this with Moores' (1993b) empirical questions and echoes my own interests thus:

...the experience of domestic television consumption is then one of 'simultaneously staying home and imaginatively, at least, going places'. If broadcasting is able to 'transport' viewers and listeners to previously distant and unknown sites, mediating between private and public domains then, as Moores notes, we need to specify the kind of 'journeys' that are made. Who chooses to go where, with whom and why.

(Morley,2000:149)

For many who have moved to live in new countries and localities this process is not so much a question of seeing new and distant places depicted on the screen but of revisiting old and formerly familiar places and former homes. It is a question of how media consumption mediates between different private places and multiple public places, between several different instances of the local and the global.

#### **(iv) Difference/homogeneity/heterogeneity**

Discussions of the global/local nexus bring us to considerations of difference and how difference exists and operates within globalisation. Thus much of the debate here has been about the extent to which globalisation results in homogeneity (that is, via a form of cultural imperialism), and to what extent it can also allow a degree of heterogeneity. Giddens (1994) argues that local reactions and responses to globalisation do exist:

the point is not only that the other 'answers back', but that mutual interrogation is possible. (ibid: 25)

However, the question remains as to how much mutual interrogation is possible within the existing power frames. There is now a growing recognition that global developments are multi-centred or 'nodal'. Using this image we are able to move towards seeing global connections not simply with the polarities of north/south or centre/periphery but can conceive of different places being centres of different types of 'globalities'. This also allows us to think more creatively about how societies and people adjust to the demands of globalisation. Several observers cite Japanese development as an example of the possibility of retaining the traditional, whilst still addressing and being central to global transactions. Indeed Japan is itself the centre of its own economic and cultural globalisation and thus challenges the

West's own sense of privilege and security (Morley and Robins, 1995; Robertson, 1995; Featherstone and Lash, 1995). A recent media example of this would be the global dissemination of the Pokemon phenomenon (Tobin, forthcoming).

In this context Robins (1991) points out that globalisation has increasingly taken account of local differences and, in fact, thrives on the commodification of difference. Ethnic and niche marketing is an increasing feature of fashion and economic success. The building of the celebrity status of the Somali fashion model, Iman, with her refugee past as part of the image is a poignant example. This is also fundamental to Hall's (1991a) argument about the importance of difference and 'specificity' in the processes of globalisation.

In the media, global news networks have had to adapt to keep a market edge and keep local audiences. CNN for example, despite its success, had to recognise that its future progress as market leader would demand the production of different editions, in different languages, in different parts of the world (Morley and Robins, 1995). Children's programmes such as Sesame Street and, more recently, Teletubbies have also attempted with greater or lesser success to recognise local language and cultures in parts of their programmes and have used this in their global marketing (Hendershot, 1999). Many programmes (such as The Simpsons) thrive on the inter textuality and transnational images that are only possible through the increased global awareness of their audiences. Robins (1991) thus argues that one of the aspects of globalisation that needs to be taken into account is the way in which it thrives on the re-relating of local, regional, national and global alliances. It pays no attention to previously fixed borders.

[W]hat is being acknowledged is that globalization entails a corporate presence in, and understanding of, the 'local' arena. But the 'local' in this sense does not correspond to any specific territorial configuration. The global-local nexus is about the relation between globalizing and particularizing dynamics in the strategy of the global corporation, and the 'local' should be seen as a fluid and relational space, constituted only in and through its relation to the global.

(ibid: 319)

This invites the debate about whether the experience of 'difference' at the 'centre' is one of any depth or significance. The meeting of cultures at the centre is symbolised in the increasing numbers of 'ethnic' restaurants and commercial goods available as luxury items. But questions remain as to who is rich enough to have access to them, what type of meeting this is and who is making the adaptations. Massey (1999) raises the question about who in fact is telling, experiencing and owning this story of this meeting of differences in the first place. Again we need to look more carefully at the power dynamics that determine the choices that people are making. Home and place have always been in the process of negotiation and formation in relation to the 'other'. They have always been both open and closed. The difference now, according to Massey, is that this has only recently been recognised by the white, the rich and the powerful (Massey, 1992).

This conceptualising of difference within globalisation and global/local relations themselves is complicated by the rise in nationalism and fundamentalist religions both at the 'centre' and at the 'periphery'. Faced with increasing migration, either bringing foreign people in or making you yourself the foreigner, and with global media that do not reflect local beliefs and values, people often withdraw into tradition. These traditions are not necessarily national but might reflect regional differences. They might also be more to do with nostalgia and imagination than reality (Bauman, 1995). However, these reactions themselves are also globalised. The reaction itself is often sparked by globalisation or the realigning of nation states but, more importantly, many nationalist campaigns often live by the support of those no longer living there. Fundamentalist beliefs unite people across several continents (Appadurai, 1996). Space and locality are therefore again re-formed in the interaction between the local and the global.

Appadurai (1990) develops this theme of the breakdown of the centre/periphery (illustrated above in the case of Japan) and the dynamic of multiple relationships between the local and the global. He stresses the various disjunctures between economy, culture and politics that constitute globalisation. He proposes looking at global development and relations in terms of five zones or 'scapes': ethnoscaples, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes and ideoscapes. In this way he is able to move away from the idea of directional and purposeful flows and to

enter the world of perspective, imagination and negotiation. This allows a greater flexibility in the conceptualisation of global processes. There is greater scope for movement, overlap and conflict, rather like Venn diagrams with no fixed edges that shift composition with each new problem. These become 'imagined worlds' in which different global influences operate across the local, personal and international spheres. This also allows a rethinking of the notion of diaspora as we shall see in Chapter 2.

### **(v) Agency and the public sphere**

Bauman's (1998) criticism of globalisation theories and theorists centres on their celebration of the global and the cosmopolitan. He maintains there is not enough consideration of the real lives of people at the local level, particularly those at the local in the centre. He claims that "rather than homogenising the human condition the technological annulment of temporal/spatial distances tends to polarise it" (ibid:18). One of his main arguments is that the process of globalisation has been framed in passive terms. It is seen as simply something that is done to us, rather than specifying who is doing what and what role we ourselves are playing. The result, he claims, is that those people remaining in the local, the 'vagabonds', are caught there with no means to either improve their condition or move out. Their only access to 'far away' is on screen, divorced from agency and responsibility. When it depicts the poor, a disaster or a conflict, television rarely puts the images into political context thus making it appear that nobody is responsible and that very little can be done to effect change. Bauman opposes what he terms the 'tourist', (the celebrity who is mobile, mobility being the new status symbol), and the 'vagabond'. Rather than re-framing the local to see it as a place for the celebration and study of travel as Clifford (1992) proposes he fears that the loss of shared physical public space is a basic threat to democracy:

a territory stripped of public space provides little chance for norms being debated, for values to be confronted, to clash and to be negotiated. The verdicts of right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, proper and improper, useful and useless may only descend from on high, from regions never to be penetrated by any but the most inquisitive eye...no room is left for the 'local opinion leader'; no room left for 'local opinion' as such.



(Bauman , 1998:25)

This is a rather apocalyptic view but it raises the important question of agency and the ways in which meaningful shared space in the local can still be achieved within global-local connections. The point here is that the new 'habitats of meaning' demand a rethinking of community and accountability. We need to study how the changing cultural forms and connections of globalised living can still address the realities of the local both at the centre and the periphery. We need to look again at the ways in which people use the media in the creation of meaning and connection and their role in transcultural imaginations and social relations. Morley and Robins (1995) suggest that we should indeed be thinking in terms of 'spaces of transmission' rather than the physical boundaries of nations, thus highlighting the power of the media in forming and realigning social connections in an age of increasing migration.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has looked at some 'top down' accounts of globalisation and migration. Globalisation has redrawn the relationships between global and local, being away and being here. Media are key players in these changes. Rather than making a homogeneous world culture, however, globalisation and local responses have created new differences. New localities are forming, both geographical and of the imagination. Within these localities there are different reactions – the pull into tradition and an ideological rejection of globalisation, or an aspiration towards the cosmopolitan.

What is missing in all this discussion, however, is a consideration of the real lives of children in these changes. Let us consider in what ways the lives of the migrant children I will be working with are elucidated by these theoretical debates. In their journeys these children have moved from the economic periphery to the centre, both for safety and to find a better life and access to a better material future. Their experiences are individual and particular but they all experience aspects of their present geographical locality in common and make the necessary adaptations to new cultural demands, both in terms of language and custom. But through a globalised media they are all linked to different, other 'locals'. These are actual

places but also new connections of affiliation and imagination, which provide both continuity and conflict. For a Turkish child living in London, for example, the local mosque is linked to a wider Islamic media-linked community. Cartoon Network is both linked to a previous 'local' but also an imagined and distant dominating cultural centre. The choice between watching English television at home or Turkish television at a friend's house constitutes an experience of living with different places within the same geographical space. Thus we begin to see the ways in which the media facilitate a diversity of global experience. However, this focus on experience at a distance could be at the expense of living effectively within the locality. Learning to live with difference next door begins to take second place to the global experience. The central theme of my thesis is how these changes impact on migrant and refugee children's lives and their development of a sense of home and identity. It is the complexity of the subjective experience of these dynamics that is missing in much of the theoretical debate and it is this that I intend to explore further.

## CHAPTER 2 MEDIA REPRESENTATION, DIASPORA, AND NEW ETHNICITIES

### Introduction

School populations are always a reflection of the patterns of migration into a country and within a country. In the UK this reflects the urban/rural divide in the racial make-up of our population, and the fact that most immigrants to this country settle or are settled in poorer rather than more affluent areas. Britain has a long history of receiving both refugees and migrants. At the same time it also has a long history of emigration. In fact the numbers leaving the country still outweigh those arriving, although this is rarely publicised.

There are three areas of debate in which we can begin to consider the subjective experiences of migration in the UK. They highlight different points of tension in the negotiations of belonging (inclusion and exclusion) and the formations of identity. In all three the media are active agents. Here I look at the official and media climate surrounding the reception of refugees and migrants in the UK and the role of **media representations** in creating a climate that is often hostile to arriving migrants. However, these immediate national and political considerations need to be seen in the context of the wider historical and cultural debates about **diaspora**. It is here that the ideas of distance and connection in everyday interactions have most often and most meaningfully found expression. Finally, the concept of **new ethnicities** challenges both the essentialist notion of roots, where you 'come from', and negative media representations. It aims to redefine national and racial identities and to challenge exclusion on the basis of black ethnicity. Children are not directly addressed in these debates but they form a starting point and framework within which children's specific experiences can be contextualised.

## **(i) UK immigration and the public agenda**

Media images and representations of migrants, refugees, and of immigration itself in the destination countries set the tone and the social climate into which the migrant and refugee child arrives and lives. In this section I look at the recent history of immigration in this country, at attitudes to refugees and at the motivating forces within public debate that have driven current policy. The aim is to put my discussions of a particular locality, and the experience of some of its child residents in my study, within the wider context of legal and public considerations.

### **(a) Refugees since the cold war: changing tides and definitions**

While the UK prides itself on its reputation as a safe haven, actual policy illustrates a different picture. Harding (2000) argues that the UN Convention on Refugees of 1951 was an instrument of the Cold War, allowing the West to receive dissidents from the Soviet bloc and other communist regimes. One British example of this approach is to compare the strong resistance by the Thatcher government (and the press) to the arrival of Ugandan Asians from 1972 on the basis of potential racial conflict, with the welcome afforded the Vietnamese boat people in late 1970s who were fleeing a very different shade of government. In this view

offering asylum served in a bigger ideological battle, the cold war, and underlined the demonisation of communism and the superiority of liberal western democracies. (Bunting, 2001)

With the end of the cold war, and with increasing demographic movement it has become increasingly difficult to differentiate between refugees, as narrowly defined by the UN Convention on Refugees and other migrants (UNHCR, 2000). People are moving for a variety of reasons, many of them closely related to their own and their families' survival, and not always related directly to the actions of oppressive governments. Others are directly the victims of torture and human rights abuses. In this climate Europe has increasingly sought to exclude 'economic migrants' who are not covered by the Convention and to keep successful asylum applications to a steady small percentage.

'Fortress Europe' has been developing over several decades, shifting the balance from refugee protection to immigration control. The 1970s saw an economic recession due to the oil crisis and a resultant closing of the doors for migrant workers who had previously been encouraged to come. The 1980s saw increased numbers of asylum seekers coming independently from the world's trouble spots rather than as organised groups through international agreement. In the 1990s Europe began to implement several restrictive measures (UNHCR, 2000). First 'carrier sanctions' were imposed to prevent people without documents from reaching Europe. Secondly, western Europe began to shift responsibility by drawing up lists of 'safe third countries' which meant that refugees could be returned to countries through which they had passed in their attempts to get to western Europe. Thirdly, Governments began to reinterpret the UN Convention and practise a more restrictive definition in their assessment of asylum applications. Fourthly, several measures were introduced that saw the detention of asylum seekers, denial of social assistance and a restriction in employment.

#### **(b) The criminalisation of refugees**

The official attitude in this country was typified by Margaret Thatcher when she stated, "We joined Europe to have free movement of goods... I did not join Europe to have free movement of terrorists, criminals, drugs, plant and animal diseases and rabies and illegal immigrants." (Daily Mail 18.5.89)

With the legal entry routes being closed off, asylum seekers have joined other migrants who have increasingly resorted to illegal means to try to gain entry. Thus we see the rise in 'human trafficking' and the images and stories of overcrowded boats, bodies in containers and people storming the Channel Tunnel that regularly fill our screens. Asylum seekers and migrants have been criminalised. Emotion, fear and prejudice are the underlying forces driving policy and public debate. A Report by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance about the UK and published by the Council of Europe stated:

Many politicians have contributed to, or at least not adequately prevented, public debate taking on an increasingly intolerant line with at times racist and xenophobic overtones. Public statements have tended to depict asylum seekers

and 'economic migrants' explicitly or by inference, as a threat ... politicians should not only avoid promoting the general assumption that most asylum claimants are not genuine, but also the vilification of those who are considered by the authorities not to have valid asylum claims and are sometimes defined as 'economic migrants' ... or 'bogus asylum-seekers'.

(European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2001)

A poll carried out by The Guardian and ICM in 2001 highlighted the level of ignorance and racism that still exists. Most respondents claimed that there were several times more immigrants and asylum seekers in the UK than is statistically true. Romas and Eastern Europeans were thought to be high on the list while in fact it was Iraqis and Afghanis at that time. Statistics from the Refugee Council ([www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/infocentre](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/infocentre)) show that out of 76,040 asylum applicants in the year 2000, Iraq represented 9%, Sri Lanka 8%, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 7%, Afghanistan 7% and Somalia 6% although these statistics change with the international situation. Significantly the majority of respondents in the survey said that their neighbours would be happy if white southern Africans arrived to live in their area while nearly two thirds would disapprove if they were Iraqi. The link between immigrant and Black is firmly sown into the public subconscious and this racism is the root of much of the problem.

### **(c) Racism, the media and refugees**

It is this combination of racism and xenophobia that the press, mostly the tabloids, both feed and thrive on and that greets new migrants and refugees. The barrage of anti immigration headlines reaches regular peaks. Hargreaves (2001) notes that late in the 1992 general election campaign racist coverage in the tabloids is thought to have swung public opinion against Labour and to have allowed a narrow majority to fall to the Conservatives. Local press coverage of Romas arriving in Dover in 1998 resulted in the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act. In this case the Kent police threatened to bring charges against the local paper for inciting racial hatred. The editor, however, stated that he was merely reflecting the reality and not influencing it. The Refugee Council has found it necessary to have a permanently changing section of their website entitled 'press myths' with facts that counter the tabloid hyperbole.

One of the central issues is how one can, and if one should, separate analyses of media coverage of race, immigration and refugee issues. The problem is that 'refugee' is equated in most people's minds with 'race'. When the press talk of an 'invasion' it is in terms of 'non-white' people. On the whole refugees in our recent history have been Jewish, Black or Asian. During the Balkan conflicts people remarked upon the strangeness of seeing 'white' people on the move on their screens. The general visual image influences the attitude, and attitudes to race influence attitudes to refugees. This is what the press play on. The issue is really about how we as a nation see ourselves, and whom we constitute as not being 'one of us'. As Hargreaves (2001) states:

The media are undoubtedly a powerful force in the creation and/or dissemination – the distinction is as important as it is problematic – of public images of the 'imagined community' that is the nation. The extent to which immigrants and their descendants are portrayed by broadcast and print media as part of – or apart from – the national community may significantly affect attitudes among the majority population towards minority groups. Access to information flows and to decision making processes within the media may in turn affect the capacity of minorities to successfully mobilise in support of ethnically oriented goals  
(ibid:23)

The constant tension is that while the UK holds dear its reputation for receiving refugees in the past it also believes that its national identity is too fragile to accommodate too much ethnic diversity (Bunting, 2001). However, one new development that Kaye (2001) highlights is that in recent press coverage of refugee issues there has been a demotion of the term 'asylum seeker' to a term of abuse with racist overtones. Indeed he notes that in the lead up to the Balkan conflict Kosovans in this country were referred to most often as the denigrated 'asylum seeker', but once conflict had erupted they became transformed into 'refugees', thus gaining some credence. In these ways the press, over time, influences not only how public debates are framed but also the public agenda.

#### **(d) Current legislation and changes**

This then becomes the background within which legislation is drafted and agreed. It is also the background against which schools receive new children either temporarily (until they are moved on or re-housed) or for longer periods, and within which they are having to negotiate

the legal and social situations of these children and their families. The social stigma now surrounding children who arrive from other countries to our schools and the fear that it induces in its victims is the first barrier that the school has to acknowledge in trying to build a relationship with the child and her family. It is also the first thing that the child has to live through in relation to her peers.

The present 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act aimed to ensure that genuine asylum seekers are not left destitute while minimising the incentives to economic migration, particularly by minimising cash payments to asylum seekers (Immigration and Nationality Report, 1999). In practice, for example, this has meant that asylum seekers receive vouchers to exchange in designated shops for 'essential living needs' rather than welfare benefits in cash like other low income families. In addition the Home Office has been able to impose residence restrictions, implementing a policy of enforced dispersal to other parts of the country thus spreading the cost across all local authorities. These are just two measures that illustrate the tone of the 1999 legislation. The desire to keep immigrants at a distance and to mark them as undesirable is symbolised in the voucher scheme. In this climate it is conveniently forgotten that most refugees and displaced people are accommodated by those states closest to the trouble zones which they have left. These are often the poorer countries least able to afford the burden.

Recent world events arising from the September 11 attacks on New York and rising levels of criticism of this legislation have already brought about a Government rethink. In October 2001 the Home Secretary announced proposed changes both to terrorism and asylum legislation. Notably these include a rethinking of both the voucher and the dispersal schemes. However, more significantly, the announcement appeared to bring a closer alliance between these two areas of the law. There is a tragic complementarity between the closure of borders, involving the strengthening of laws against an assumed foreign threat, and the celebration of travel and the cosmopolitan that marks our age (Hannerz, 1996). It clearly illustrates the "global dimension of all privilege and deprivation, however local" (Bauman , 1998: 87). Despite these changes, public debate, media representations and the current legislative climate are likely to reinforce a situation in which arriving migrants and refugees, rather than



being welcomed for their skills and potentials, rapidly form part of a separated and labelled underclass within our society, an underclass that reflects a global underclass (Morley, 2000).

## **(ii) Theories of diaspora: linking past, present and future**

In this section I will be considering the term diaspora, its history, its typologies and characteristics and how it relates to globalisation. This theorisation is useful in assisting us to be more specific in our understandings of the different types and characteristics the term contains. However, while focusing on diaspora we need to remember that the majority experience is not to move or migrate but to be the host. Yet, despite resistance (see section 1 of this chapter) the host is also changed in some way by meeting diasporas, and diasporas themselves are changed in meeting each other. It is the role of the media in this dynamic that primarily interests me in this study and while raising certain issues here I return to this discussion in more detail in chapter 4.

### **(a) Diasporas and their changing forms**

The word diaspora comes from the Greek verb *speira* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over). For the Greeks it was a term used to describe their own expansion beyond their borders, their migration and settler colonisation of new areas.

When applied to humans, the ancient Greeks thought of diaspora as migration and colonization. By contrast, for Jews, Africans, Palestinians and Armenians the expression acquired a more sinister and brutal meaning. Diaspora signified a collective trauma, a banishment, where one dreamed of home but lived in exile. Other peoples abroad who have also maintained strong collective identities have, in recent years, defined themselves as diasporas, though they were neither active agents of colonization nor passive victims of persecution. (Cohen, R, 1997:ix)

It is the sense of trauma that we most commonly associate with diaspora. Cohen (ibid) argues that we need to be clearer about the different types of diaspora and the different experiences they contain. It is especially interesting to look at diaspora's original meaning, as a form of dominant colonising rather than the result of victim movement. It is in this sense that the media has often been considered: as an arm of colonialism and cultural imperialism often excluding the voices of other diasporas. Cohen usefully outlines five different types of

diaspora: victim/refugee diasporas (Africans, Armenians); imperial/colonial (Ancient Greek, British); labour/service (Indentured Indians, Turks); trade/ business/professional (Venetians, Lebanese, today's Indians); cultural/ hybrid/postmodern (Caribbean peoples, today's Chinese). He also outlines nine features or characteristics that he feels typify and define what makes a diaspora:

Normally, diasporas exhibit several of the following features: 1) dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically; 2) alternatively the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; 3) a collective memory and myth about the homeland; 4) an idealization of the putative ancestral home; 5) a return movement; 6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time; 7) a troubled relationship with host societies; 8) a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries; and 9) the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries.

(ibid:180)

He notes that these are not absolute and that diasporas change their nature and can take dual or multiple forms. For example the Jewish diaspora, as one most associated with pain and trauma, he typifies as an essentially victim/refugee diaspora. Yet not all migrations of Jewish peoples were forced. He argues that along with the pain has been growth, development and an intellectual tradition, all of which have come to typify 'Jewishness'. This could not have developed in narrow tribal confines. In relation to another victim diaspora, the Palestinians, he notes the very different role of the Jews.

These classifications, while less poetic than Appadurai's "diasporas of hope, diasporas of terror and diasporas of despair" (1996:6), tell a similar story but with useful precision that I will apply in thinking about the wider contexts of children's migration experiences.

Categories become meaningful in considering the realities of children's lives but also the crossovers and individual experiences take on a different meaning seen in this kind of wider historical context. Sreberny (2000), on the other hand, criticises such categorisations as being contrary to the realities of migration and diaspora, whose very experience is in essence unfixed, temporary and 'becoming'. They also ignore the ways in which diasporic experience crosses borders and creates new hybrids or third spaces. It is in this third space that the media are significant.

A focus on diaspora seems to invite a looking around, not only in and back but also a scoping all-round gaze, multi-directional. (ibid:182)

This is particularly relevant to children who are at the very beginning of identity formation and where 'looking around' is an essential part of growing up.

Diaspora has often been connected with the aftermath of colonialism - with peoples who already had a cultural connection with the places of destination. It is within this sense of diaspora that the 'new ethnicities' work, discussed in section 3 of this chapter, is conceptualised and within this and characteristic 7 and 8 above that most analysis of 'settlement' has been located. The different types of diaspora make clear the variety of historical and very specific experiences contained in the term. As globalisation changes everyone's relationship with the world, so too it changes the experience of migration and diaspora itself, not only in volume but in experience and in quality.

With increased mass and individual migrations there are inevitably areas of debate about the limits of the term diaspora. Cohen (1997) argues against seeing religion as a factor in diaspora and indeed he does not include shared belief systems as one of his list of characteristics. This is a question that is raised later in Chapter 4 when I consider minority media uses of Islamic media. It is clear that the types and varieties of migration and diaspora are changing and need to be constantly revisited. Two important areas to consider in relation to diaspora and globalisation are the ways in which diasporas (along with other aspects of globalisation – as we have seen above) increasingly challenge national borders and secondly, and most importantly for our purposes, the ways in which the media facilitate this. As Cohen (1997) argues:

transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination. (ibid:26)

### **(b) Media, imagination and diaspora**

Even while travel has increased it has become less necessary to travel in order to cement the bonds of diasporic communities. More important are the connections that media make possible. Indeed, specific media uses will increasingly become another characteristic of diasporas that should be added to Cohen's list. It is this relationship between diaspora and the media that occupies Appadurai (1996), as I have mentioned in the previous section. He concentrates on the role of the imagination in migration, and the role of the media as a channel for the imagination that facilitates and cements connections within diasporas. Since the role of myth, idea and idealisation are important aspects of the diasporic experience, as we can see in Cohen's list of characteristics (especially 3 and 4), the media become central to their perpetuation and indeed development. They become not merely presenters of current ideas and images but creators of them:

the story of mass migrations (voluntary and forced) is hardly a new feature of human history. But when it is juxtaposed with the rapid flow of mass mediated images, scripts, and sensations, we have a new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities. As Turkish guest workers in Germany watch Turkish films in their German flats, as Koreans in Philadelphia watch the 1988 Olympics in Seoul through satellite feeds from Korea, and as Pakistani cabdrivers in Chicago listen to cassettes of sermons recorded in mosques in Pakistan or Iran, we see moving images meet deterritorialised viewers. These create diasporic public spheres, phenomena that confound theories that depend on the continued salience of the nation-state as the key arbiter of important social changes.

(ibid:4)

Appadurai (1996) makes a link with Anderson's (1983) 'imagined communities' but expands it to 'imagined worlds', "the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe". By thinking beyond the local /global nexus and beyond the national, he maintains, we are more able to conceive of diaspora and the consequences of deterritorialisation. For Appadurai (1996), mediascapes facilitate the work of the imagination in 'diasporic public spaces' and in the realliances of the global, national and regional. They are thus also central to ethnoscapes. These spheres are described by Appadurai as 'postnational orders', that emerge as media producers and audiences create transnational linkages, and as audiences engage in conversations involving

both those who move and those who stay behind. Prioritising the imagination and media are useful in revealing the complexity of globalising influences and of diasporas. However, Appadurai has been criticised (Fog Olwig, 2000) for being too 'top down' in his approach, privileging the imaginations of the cultural elite. Indeed it is hard to relate much of his theorising to the concrete realities of everyday life. However, it does open up new possibilities in conceptualising some wide brush global relationships and moves us beyond only looking at the individual experience or the separated ethnic experience.

### **(c) The specificity of experience**

Brah's (1996) approach to diasporas is to stress the specificities contained within them and the personal aspects of their lived experience, including her own. She maintains that diaspora refers to a 'dispersion from'. Thus it implies a home or a centre from which the journey (another essential diasporic term) out begins. It is not only the when, why and how of the leaving that we need to consider but the different experiences within each diaspora.

All diasporic journeys are... embarked upon, lived and re-lived through multiple modalities: modalities for example, of gender 'race', class, religion, language and generation. As such, all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common 'we'.  
(ibid:183)

Importantly, Brah argues that the journey contained in the diasporic experience implies a location in which the journey will, even if temporarily, end. The question implied then is how this location is experienced and settled. Often this settlement is depicted in binary opposites. The new arrivants are seen in essentialist terms as Black, Jew, Hindu and the Other, the dominant culture whom they meet as a binary opposite, White, Gentile, Muslim<sup>1</sup>. By stressing the differentiated experience of migration Brah highlights the fact that the situation is more complex. Within each diaspora, according to specific factors, there is never only one Other but "multiple others embedded within and across binaries" (ibid) In the present situation of diasporas crossing over and meeting and bringing their different experiences to

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<sup>1</sup> Morley and Robins (1995) discussed the primary 'other' in Europe as reverting increasingly to Islam. Since the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 this has taken a sharper focus. What is dubiously coined Islamophobia is now part of the political and social climate. The prevalent polarity is now Muslim/Christian.

bear we need to consider not only their differentiated pasts but in what ways and through what processes 'location' becomes 'home' and includes the influences of these crossing paths. Sreberny's (2000) image of 'looking around' is particularly pertinent here.

Along with Cohen (1997), Brah (1996) stresses that diasporic experience is not all trauma but also one of new beginnings. The media play a role both in keeping the imaginative and actual connections of the past but also in shaping the connections of the present and future. Cohen's last two characteristics of diaspora looks to a future in a receptive place. Sreberny (2000, 1999) addresses whether or not there is an invitation for migrants to enter the new location particularly through the media, a point explored in section (i). The question then remains centrally as to how the host is changed by contact with immigrants and if the new beginnings sought by the arrivants are allowed to take shape and to take root.

Thus accounts of diaspora move us towards considerations of real lives in migration but don't take enough account of the differences contained within them. Diasporic communities are tailor made to adapt to the new demands of globalisation but with increasing migration they too are under pressure both from within and through the increased cross currents of diasporic connections. The focus has been too much on the places of the past and on heritage. Not enough attention has been paid to the impact of, and on, the present location. The meeting of diasporas in the new places of settlement influence each other as well as the host community.

### **(iii) New Ethnicities: formations of new identities**

Whereas theories of diaspora have tended to focus on the past and on heritage, the thinking behind the new ethnicities project concentrates on the new roots that diasporic people set out and the ways in which this changes both the arrivant and the host community. In the context of children who are at the start of their identity formation, of schools that contain children from a wide variety of backgrounds and in the context of discussions about belonging, inclusion and exclusion this thinking has been a powerful influence.

### **(a) Narratives of national belonging**

The school building itself is often a concrete representation of national culture that tells the story of the history of education in this country. The stories that are told in symbolic form through uniform, national curriculum, school dinners, styles of teaching and teaching texts are designed to be part of the larger narrations that form the idea of nation and national culture. These are the instruments of identity formation and belonging or 'unbelonging'. They also prevent or limit other narratives from being told or represented and as such differentiate between 'us' and 'them'. The structures and contents of education have always been powerful tools in colonial as well as national power, in the same way the media are used to create a sense of national belonging (Scannell, 1989; Schlesinger, 1987; Morley and Robins, 1995) and define what it means to 'belong' to that particular nation, as we have seen in Chapter 1. As Said (1993) puts it:

The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them. (ibid:xiii)

Thus the notion of a national culture is central to the idea of the nation state (Hall, 1992). As we have seen in the previous chapter, the latter is now under pressure to change, or rather has lost significant aspects of its former power. The former is also undergoing radical questioning. Relating this to 'Englishness' Hall (1991b) sees this collective identity being forced to change as a result of the decline of colonial powers, migration arising from increasing globalisation and new regional alignments such as the European Union.

### **(b) Identity and difference**

As with ideas of national culture, notions of individual and community identity have also undergone radical transformation. There is an interplay between how we see ourselves as the same as others and how we see ourselves as different. The first is closely related to national cultures in the sense of a shared national history, shared traditions and myths. It speaks of an essentialised being – a fixed identity, a continuity. The second has developed as a result of what Hall (1992) calls a 'decentring of the subject'. Here the essentialised 'me' has been questioned, 'put under erasure'. Post-structuralist theory has forced a realisation of the

multiple strands and contradictory influences that make up the modern subject. Hall (1996) talks of the separation of the subject from the nation and the growing importance of difference in identity formations.

We need to situate the debates about identity within all those historically specific developments and practices which have disturbed the relatively settled character of many populations and cultures, above all in relation to the processes of globalization... and the processes of forced and 'free' migration which have become a global phenomenon of the so-called 'post colonial' world. Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation.  
(ibid:4)

The central theme here is that identity, like culture, "is always in the process of formation" (Hall 1991b:47), and so we can claim agency in these formations. We are active performers although only within the available resources and representations. There is a sense, in this extract, of a regaining of power, rather than a passive acceptance. This derives from the importance of representation and narrative, imagination and fantasy. These reformations are inevitably part of migration and the face to face meeting of different people and places that migration brings.

Hall (ibid) refers to Derrida and the concept of 'difference', in which 'differ' gives way to 'defer'. Difference is no longer seen in terms of clear oppositions but in more complex nuances "of the trace of something which still retains its roots in one meaning while it is, as it were, moving to another..."(ibid:50). Hall rejects Derrida's direction that takes this idea into "the endless play of difference" (ibid:50) and uses it to highlight the need to recognise and keep what he terms the 'hard game' of the politics of identity. To concentrate only on the play of difference is to lose the political importance of difference.



### **(c) The new ethnicities 'project'**

The idea of the trace and the translation from one meaning to another is the basis of the thinking behind the concept of 'new ethnicities'. Building from an identity that is centred in one ethnic experience to incorporate another and thereby forge yet another, this time, new, changed ethnicity challenges any essentialist notion of ethnicity itself. Such thinking makes difference not a problematic opposition but a necessary and positive part of the experience of living with migration, both as host and immigrant. While the idea of new ethnicities is most often associated with British Black or Asian youth what it does is also to question the assumed invisibility of white ethnicities.

The idea of new ethnicities has its roots in a particular historical and political point in time. Hall situates these identity discussions firmly in the arena of race and cultural politics, motivated by the political realities of the 1980s. Early discussions in this country were directly related to the Thatcher era and the resurgence of an aggressive political nationalism. New thinking about identity challenged the prevailing ethos that to be Black meant you were not British. But it also challenged the related assumption that if you were Black you belonged to a specific 'elsewhere'. The emphasis moved from where you came from to where you were. The most powerful effect of highlighting the concept of the 'Black Atlantic' as opposed to the 'Black diaspora' was to emphasise the in-between-ness and the intercultural nature of Black people living in Britain (Gilroy (1993a). In doing this it also challenged essentialist notions of national cultural identity. It challenged the national narration to include difference and new formations of difference. Seen in this way the thinking behind new ethnicities is a directly political challenge with the aim of changing perceptions of race and belonging in this country. As such it challenges the accepted notions of national narration. Cohen (1999) has termed it the new ethnicities *project* because it was conceived with a clearly defined political aim. Gilroy (1993b) writing about the photographer David A Bailey puts it thus:

For a brief moment to claim the right to be black and English at the same time was a gesture of insubordination crucial to the task of changing what England is.  
(ibid:147)

Much of the work of the new ethnicities project is based on thinking in the area of language in the sense of signifying practices, the signs and symbols that make up the whole of communication. It is within cultural politics and the politics of representation that it has its strongest voice. The importance of this rethinking is in the ways in which it questions media representations of peoples and cultures. Films such as Handsworth Songs and My Beautiful Launderette were part of this challenge.

However, the new ethnicities project is also, crucially, about the more individual changes needed to challenge internalised perceptions of belonging. The ideas of difference and the ways in which we form a realisation of the self in relation to the 'Other' are central to this rethinking. Fanon (1968) raised the issue of how the colonial subject internalises the ways that the 'rulers' see him and argued that it is only by freeing themselves from the power of that gaze that they can free themselves politically. This was taken up and used by others, not only in relation to race, but in a recognition of the psychological and subjective aspects of identity formation. Brah (1996) relates how she met this in the questions she was asked in an interview for a scholarship. For the first time she had to justify being both Indian and African. What she lived as a unified experience became separated under the gaze of the 'Other'. Forming cultural representations of this personal experience and placing it within the political is what makes the new ethnicities project important.

#### **(d) The continuing relevance and critiques of new ethnicities**

The question now is to what extent these debates are still relevant to today's situation and above all to what extent they apply to the new reasons and routes for migration. The thinking behind the new ethnicities project relates more to those who have already settled, to the second and third generation migrants, usually from former colonies and this, in a profound sense, limits the thinking. While many aspects are applicable there is a danger of over generalising the possibilities and the processes of hybridisation to other specific situations. The new ethnicities project is a powerful challenge to accepted notions and crucial in developing a new look at questions of ethnicity and the role of representation and media. However, as I have indicated, there are several problems. Below I outline three main criticisms of it as it applies to today's context and that are relevant to this study.

Hall (1991b) argues that new ethnicities and the expressions that arise from their difficulties and disjunctures are the politics of the local and that these local formations and struggles can be brought to bear on the global. However, in the celebration of the new routes that this offered second generation Black and Asian young people the importance of political positionality, 'the links between structural and cultural racisms', that were the basis of Hall's analysis were lost (Cohen, 1999). Cohen describes how the social mobility of a 'youthful multicultural intelligentsia' has left behind a black and white underclass who by not achieving mobility, are disconnected from the global society even if they are part of a diasporic community.

The first critique, therefore, is that much of the new ethnicities cultural expression has stayed or been ghettoised into the safe place of the avant-garde. The 'multicultural intelligentsia' are divorced from the institutional discrimination that still operates for many young people, preventing them from participating in the new ethnicities project. Cohen argues that it is not until both cultural and structural or institutional anti-racist work rebuilds these links that the 'new ethnicities' project can be tested. In one sense, in the rush to celebrate the new global-local the old local has been forgotten.

If the poor or disadvantaged are not able to participate in or experience the celebration of 'hybridity', this also has a global dimension. Spivak (1987) internationalises the discussion in relation to global inequalities. Where there is an imbalance in the meeting of cultures, she argues, or where one culture is too damaged or too different from the other that it cannot be 'read' by the other culture, there can be little genuine exchange. In the context of the media this is clear. Inequalities in global media exclude the poorer nations and cultures from being represented at all, often even within their own borders. Where they are, they are represented through the eyes of the more powerful. Depictions of mixing of cultures in the media are dominated by a media, in turn dominated by the USA.

Mainstream global television programmes portray ethnicities within strict limitations. Culturally different ways of living, of family, of goals and aspirations are marginalised. The

Cosby Show, for example, portrays a particular type of acceptable middle class black family that is classically American in its way of life. While such popular global television products are open to multiple readings, they are created primarily for the western market. There is a stark absence of other depictions of difference from other places. These become invisible while what is portrayed builds a picture of what is considered the norm. Thus the second critique is that hybridisation in this context comes closer to assimilation by the most powerful of the less powerful.

The third criticism is that the celebration of hybridity and the theorisation of new ethnicities simply do not take enough account of the pain and dislocations experienced by migrants. Again the negotiations are unequal. The feelings of never really belonging, while being a resource for much cultural expression, are not always resources for joy. The pain and dislocations seem to have been sidelined in the celebration of the cosmopolitan elite (Morley, 2000; Amit-Talai, 1998).

Even for those who do settle, and who do become part of the reformed host community, there is a residual awareness of the processes they have been through that I would argue does not apply to those from the host community. Eva Hoffman (1989), moving from Poland after the war as a child, to grow up in Vancouver and then to move as a student to the USA expresses her identity crises and journeys in a powerful personal account. The point she makes is that there is a constant awareness of the differences within which her life is formed and how these change with each context. She always saw herself in relation to others' expectations. This pain of 'unbelonging' is often explored in novels (for example those by Salman Rushdie and Caryl Philips). Indeed it now forms a specific, growing and accepted genre. It is also expressed in some art house films internationally but it is rarely reflected in visual popular culture to which children have access. Again, where it is portrayed it is more often in relation to race and ethnicity than to the experience of migration itself.

## Conclusion

These three areas of debate, media reception, diaspora, and new ethnicities move us into considerations of the specific experiences of children. Legislation, public debate and panics and media portrayals around these areas are important in understanding the social and political contexts into which immigrant children arrive. The relationship between international relations, national politics, world events and children's everyday lives cannot be ignored. Diaspora allows us to consider the different reasons for moving and the different global family affiliations that continue to be active both in fact and in the imagination. Children carry with them past and continuing experiences that are powerful influences on how they build their new lives. The ways in which children play with the new identities they meet and challenge stereotyped notions of where and how they belong both within the home and in their new social relations are the beginnings of the creations of new hybrid identities.

For example a Somali girl arriving in London makes connections with a new Somali community that reflects the section of Somali society that her family were part of. This new community will have connections in other countries. But it will be distinct from other Somali groups in this country. Her parents often talk about the news broadcasts they have all watched on Arabic Television or CNN but there will be few portrayals of Somalia itself. Outside the home she wears her hijab, although she is aware of the hostility it can evoke from the segments of the host community. She is also aware that her father is not allowed to work in this country and of the personal and financial tensions that this causes in the home. She reads hostile newspaper headlines. At school she meets children from many different parts of the world who reflect different aspects of her life and personality. She speaks the same language as some of them and attends the same mosque. One of her friends is Muslim but attends a different mosque. They both speak some Arabic. She enjoys the same television programmes as many of the children at school and learns the popular music and language but rarely sees representations of 'herself'. She meets different expectations of herself as a girl. After a year she considers herself to be both Somali and a Londoner but not British. This might happen later or perhaps needs to wait for the next generation. But this too will depend on her experiences as a resident in this country.

In all three areas the media are active agents facilitating connections and new formations while also offering windows on the world of the past, present and future. As we have seen these can be negative as well as positive. Both the media and direct social contacts allow the 'looking around' that is a central part of the migrant experience. But it is through the negotiations of these images and these connections within family, community and friendships that children begin to make sense of their experiences of migration, place, home and belonging and forge their identities.

## **CHAPTER 3 CHILDHOOD, CHILDREN AND MEDIA**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I focus on theoretical debates about children, childhood and the media. Since the core of this study is children's relationships with media in the UK I need to look at how we understand childhood. I start, therefore, by considering different conceptualisations of childhood through historical, psychological and sociological paradigms. Section (ii) looks at aspects of audience studies and their development within Cultural Studies and section (iii) moves on to focus specifically on child audiences.

### **(i) Theories of Childhood**

Discussions about children and childhood have always been contentious in our society. Different attitudes to children and to child rearing expose basic assumptions about the nature of the human psyche, human relationships and society (Jenks, 1996). Are children (and therefore by implication ourselves) essentially good and innocent but weak and corruptible and, therefore, in need of protection or are they evil and in need of guidance and purification? More often than not they are seen to be both at different times. In the last couple of decades there has been a radical questioning of the concept of childhood itself and the hold of developmental psychology and socialisation theory over its conceptualisation. This section looks at these debates.

### **(a) Historical accounts of childhood**

Historical accounts of childhood are almost by definition accounts of adult constructions of childhood. They are stories about children in a different time and place told by adults who lived in the time being studied and by adult historians interpreting their story. However, they do underline the fact that ideas about childhood change with time and socio-political pressures. As Hendrick points out, "we should never forget the political nature of the social constructions of childhood" (Hendrick, 1997:60) but equally we should not forget that there are recurrent themes that re-emerge, that form part of a society's religious and cultural roots and form deep emotional channels within societies.

Aries, in his influential work, Centuries of Childhood (1962), studied representations of children (or their absence) in European paintings of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. He described how children were at first only depicted as small adults. This separation between adult society and childhood was determined by the type of work a child was able to do within the family economy. There was no protection from the realities of adult life. It was only later that they were depicted with a life separate from that of adults. By the end of the seventeenth century, when the demands of church and state for education and training coincided with increased industrialisation and demographic mobility, we see the privatisation of the family and the domination of a more 'modern' conception of childhood take hold. His conclusion, now much criticised (Pollock, 1983; Cunningham, 1995; Jenks, 1996), formed a powerful challenge to notions of the universality and normality of western modern notions of childhood.

Aries' statement that "in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist" (1962:125) is clearly problematic. While the conception of childhood that is central to western notions nowadays may not have existed for other times, places and social classes, other ideas about children, even though not separated from adulthood, surely did. This returns us to the political nature of constructions of childhood. Hendrick (1997) stresses this connection in his historical account of British childhood. He maintains that contemporary 'common sense' beliefs and social welfare institutions were formed by planned social engineering during the nineteenth century. These reforms were based on dual and contradictory beliefs. The natural goodness of the child (Rousseau and the Romantics) needed to be nurtured in a pure environment while the potential for evil within the same child (Protestant Puritanism) needed to be trained and contained. During this time the domestic and religious family became the centre of a child's life, supported by the State through welfare and public health institutions.

Visual images based on these social reforms are woven into the iconography of our society. Children are depicted within the family, in rural idylls, as vulnerable victims but rarely as active agents. In films such as *Oliver Twist* children are both dangerous and



vulnerable. The two sides struggle for supremacy. Some historical and cultural accounts of the history of childhood have deliberately used an examination of portrayals of childhood to explore adult preoccupations and emotions in their constructions of childhood (Steedman, 1995; Walkerdine, 1997). Patricia Holland (1992), for example, states:

Above all, the imagery displays the social and psychic effort that goes into negotiating the difficult distinction between adult and child, to keep childhood separate from an adulthood that can never be fully achieved. Attempts are made to establish dual and opposing categories and hold them firm, in a dichotomy set against the actual continuity of growth and development. There is an active struggle to maintain childhood – if not actual children – as pure and uncontaminated. The ultimate, if paradoxical, fear is that children will be deprived of their childhood.

(ibid:14)

Maybe one of the most powerful images and one that in future years may be used to comment on our present day relationship with children is the one of the three children walking in blurred video still in a shopping mall. Some contemporary commentators on the Bulger murder in 1993 (Jenks, 1996, Petley and Franklin, 1996) have talked of this as the marking of the end of childhood, the end of our belief in the innocence of children. Interestingly images of child soldiers in Rwanda and Sierra Leone or other parts of the world do not make us raise the same questions of ourselves despite our historical, economic and political connections.

#### **(b) Psychological accounts of childhood**

The organisation of children into education and training in Europe and the USA at the end of nineteenth century allowed them to become a captive audience for professional interests, comparisons, experiments and testing (Rose, L. 1991; Burman, 1994). The results of these activities offered a rationale for the types of State institutions that were established at that time. We began to see not only a universalisation of one concept of childhood but also a standardisation of individual children against established norms of physical, social and cognitive development.

Developmental psychology has been one of the main influences on policy agendas and the basis of much theory and practice in education and child-rearing practices. The work of Piaget is still very influential. The danger here is that the child is treated as an individual measured against universal truths, norms determined by clinical tests and observations assumed to be culturally neutral. This can set up a deficit model in two senses. Firstly, those children who do not follow this model are pathologised. Secondly children are seen as in some way lacking, as not yet formed adults, as irrational beings in need of schooling. Children's activities are significant not of themselves but as "symbolic markers of development" (Prout and James, 1997:11). In this scenario children are seen individually and in relation to an outside social world rather than as actors and participants in that world.

Since the 1960s more interpretative approaches have taken precedence within psychology (Morss, 1996), where although the centre of study is still the individual, social context is recognised. There has been a general questioning of the viability of an 'absolute' scientific test and a greater recognition of specificity and environmental influence (Burman, 1994).

At the same time that developmental paradigms were gaining social power at the beginning of the twentieth century another very different view was developing. The inner unconscious self of the child was gaining credence through the work and influence of Freud. This approach has influenced much thinking about human behaviours, not only in relation to children, and is increasingly becoming part of social 'common sense'. However, maybe one of the most powerful notions that both developmental psychology and psychoanalytic theory have brought to thinking about childhood in both the public and policy spheres is not only to individualise or subjectivise discussions but also to frame them in terms of 'needs' and, specifically, individual needs. If the child is maturing from the irrational to the rational, from childhood to adulthood, then what do they 'need' to do this effectively and successfully by adult expectations? It is also upon these assumptions of needs that much popular psychology, child-rearing books, welfare policy documents and educational practice are based.

Woodhead (1997) identifies four discourses of 'need'. These are based on physical maturational needs, psychological well-being needs, social adjustment needs and cultural needs. 'Need' itself, he claims, is a cultural construction and again is being globalised and exported through the work of aid and development agencies (Boyden and Hudson- see Burman, 1994). Within these four discourses we see the division between the subjective and the social that has developed within psychological paradigms. These are carried over into sociological ones within socialisation theory which became a powerful influence during the 1950 and 60s.

### **(c) Sociological accounts – the sociology of childhood**

The 1960s and 1970s saw a challenge to the domination of a conceptual separation of the individual from the society and of the idea of the child as a pre-social being. This change in mood was also linked to political changes occurring at the time. There was a growing awareness both of the child's active engagement and creativity within everyday social relationships (symbolic interactionism) and the different ways that actions and relationships can be represented and interpreted (semiology). The debate centred on the ways in which a person (or child) is structured and positioned by social and political discourses and to what extent they claim agency by positioning others and themselves via these same discourses.

This is the main thread that runs through the sociology of childhood. Thus childhood is seen as a social construction. Children share certain biological experiences which affect the social discourses in relation to them, particularly relating to adult power. However, the central notion is that they are also fully active players in the relationships that constitute the society in which they live, both at macro and micro levels. But this is not forgetting the power of the discourse of childhood itself and how it frames individual children's lives.

It is important to recover children as social actors (and their activity as a source of social change); as interpretivists have insisted, this in itself is not adequate. We need also, however, to grasp childhood as a social institution that exists beyond the activity of any particular child or adult. There must be theoretical space for both the construction of

childhood as an institution and the activity of children within and upon the constraints and possibilities that the institutional level creates.  
(Prout and James, 1997:27)

Viewing children as active agents with their own important points of view and yet as central to the construction of society has meant that there has been a radical shift in how we study children and their relationship to society. The sociology of childhood, which developed from this thinking, has encouraged an approach to research with children based on participation and rights (see Chapter 6). It has also promoted research focusing specifically on children in different areas of society and in different societies not primarily as part of other social units such as the family but as active agents in their own right. At the same time this is linked to increasingly influential debates about the rights of children.

#### **(d) Problems with the sociology of childhood**

In relation to this study there are three main unresolved issues in the approach taken by the sociology of childhood. The first relates to the difficulties involved in equating the cultural specificity of childhood, the internationalisation of the children's rights agenda and increasing global processes such as the media that are part of children's experiences. The question is who defines children's interests in the real and different contexts of their lives (Boyden, 1997)? The discourse of children's rights as defined in the UN Charter for Children's Rights tends to separate the rights of the individual child from a more holistic consideration of the child in relation to role, function, place and community. The idea that children have certain needs that must be met runs together with the discourse of children's rights and underlies many international policies and aid initiatives formulated in the west. Yet this view of rights and needs has been criticised as highly culturally specific. One concept of childhood thus appears to be more powerful internationally and institutionally than another and so the importance of the relativity and specificity of childhood itself is in danger of being lost in this international power dynamic.

Stephens (1995) criticises James and Prout's (1990) isolation of the cultural constructions of childhood from the global processes that are making the study of cultures more complex.

how and where are we to locate in the contemporary world distinct cultures, to be analysed each 'in their own terms'? The culturalization of childhood should not be bought at the cost of an awareness of the complexities of cultural definition in a post-modern world. Rather than merely explicating Western constructions of childhood, to be filled out in terms of gender, race and class differences and to be compared with the childhoods of other cultures, we need also to explore the global processes that are currently transforming gender, race, class, culture – and, by no means least of all, childhood itself.

(ibid, 1995:7)

Thus Stephens extends the criticism of the cultural isolation and eurocentric base of the sociology of childhood. Rightly she challenges the idea that childhood in today's globalised world can be seen as specific to one culture, one place, one time.

This brings us to the second issue which concerns the increasingly mediated nature of children's lives wherever they are living. In trying to prioritise the child voice there is a danger in the sociology of childhood of losing sight of the mediated nature of childhood itself (Buckingham, 2000a; Livingstone, 1998). The fact that children spend increasing amounts of time engaged in play and talk about toys, games and media is hardly mentioned. There is an implication that such activities are impositions from outside childhood that corrupt the idea of childhood itself. A more realistic position would be to acknowledge that such experiences are what form a large component of childhood in the real lives of real children in the world today. However, the popular concern in this area is important because it points to a deep seated concern about and fear of the changes that are underway both in ideas about childhood and in our relationship with communications media.

The third issue is that the sociology of childhood takes an almost exclusively social view of childhood. In a social constructivist account, emotions would be regarded as both part of and formed by the social interactions and negotiations of the children. Thus, what is regarded as appropriate display and behaviour is determined in social spheres and as such becomes culturally specific. As we shall see this is important in considering children's



emotional responses to television. However, in this approach the subjectivities of emotion are largely ignored. In a similar fashion the sociology of childhood essentially rejects developmental paradigms. However, children do mature and develop along broad recognisable paths. These differ according to individual, circumstance and, indeed, society and thereby set up their own social dynamics and styles of interaction. The complexities of the relationship between children, social institutions, cultures, subjectivities and maturation is what is ultimately lacking in the sociology of childhood. This does not mean that childhood itself should not be theorised in this way. Rather, as Woodhead (1997) states:

The challenge is not to shy away from developing a perspective on childhood, but to recognize the plurality of pathways to maturity within that perspective. (ibid: 76)

My position, therefore, is to build from the main thrust of the sociology of childhood while at the same time taking these debates into account. This means that, while prioritising the children's voices and experiences, I view childhood as a social construct. I approach children as active participants in the discourses that construct them. But I do this with an awareness of the cultural specificity of this idea, with a realisation of the dangers of romanticising and overplaying the power that children might have. Childhood and identity formations are mediated by the institutions, structures, individual subjectivities and cultural representations of society and these, as we have seen in previous chapters, are increasingly globalised.

## **(ii) Audiences and Cultural Studies**

As we have seen in the previous section childhood is an extremely contested and difficult area. The debates about children's relationship with media are equally complex. My main interest here is how children use media to construct identities and to make sense of the social and cultural connections within which they live. Child audience studies that focus on these areas have developed from audience research within Cultural Studies.

Early audience research, especially in relation to children, was set within psychological paradigms studying the direct 'effects' on viewers of certain (particularly violent) programmes. These were organised along experimental lines in which the social context of viewing was seen as a variable that needed to be eliminated. This approach is now widely criticised both methodologically and conceptually (Gauntlett, 1995). However, it is still powerful in discourses about children and television. The other side of the coin in early audience research was an approach that privileged the viewer, supposing that texts could be interpreted totally according to the viewer's psychological needs and uses. A third approach grounded in film theory again privileged the text but took a more psychoanalytical approach.

Into this context British Cultural Studies brought a wholly new approach in which, distinctively, neither the text nor the viewer is privileged. Television viewing is seen as part of everyday life and social practice. Unlike 'effects' research, therefore, the social context is central. How the viewer interprets what s/he watches depends on what s/he brings to the viewing. This is largely socially determined. The viewer uses the signs and symbols that are part of the society's communicative practices to read and to interpret what they watch. But the re/presentations that they see on television are not interpreted in isolation but in communication and social practice in their everyday lives. However, the text is not seen as neutral, but the product of the social and political institutions that made it. The producers have an idea of what they want the viewers to understand, usually reflecting the dominant discourses within the society. This is the dominant reading but this is not the only reading that is possible. Texts are seen as polysemic and open to several different readings. Thus Cultural Studies is centrally interested in the interrelationship and the negotiations of cultural power between the text, the reader, their social relations (or "lived cultures") and the institutions of production. Language as a representational system of signs and symbols is the central means through which meanings are negotiated and it is therefore the role of media in the reproduction of shared and contested meanings that is the centre of audience research within British Cultural Studies. It is language that offers a window on these relationships. The work of the Cultural Studies researcher, therefore, is to

interpret the audience's lived experiences as symbolic practice. Below I outline some developments of this research that are particularly pertinent to this study.

Ironically early audience research within Cultural Studies, while focusing on social contexts, tended to focus on the macro social relations and the programmes that reflected these interests. Differences according to social class dominated and readings of factual programmes took precedence (Morley, 1992). The domestic pleasures and struggles of viewing television were raised by feminists who highlighted the important role television plays in personal relationships, the different pleasures that men and women have in different types of programmes and the different roles that they play in micro social relationships. The initial focus here was on soap operas. Hobson's (1982) study of women watching Crossroads places audience studies firmly within the power dynamics of the home and considered the different role of ongoing programmes such as soaps and the emotional engagements they offer. She maintains that the particular skills brought into play by viewers of soaps are part of the cultural capital of women. Thus the debate shifted towards the role of the media in articulating the public and private spheres and the dynamics of influence and power between these social spheres. The debate about new ethnicities and the importance of representation and self representation in the redrawing of cultural and political power outlined in Chapter 2 were connected to these debates within audience research (Hall, 1991b, 1992).

While some analysts (Fiske, 1987) moved towards seeing the text as more and more open to multiple, subversive and individual readings others have held onto the tension between the text and the reader outlined in the seminal essay on encoding and decoding by Hall (1973). For example, Buckingham's study of East Enders (1987) sets out to show in what ways readings are deliberately limited by excluding certain discourses. The programme was created for certain purposes and is extended through secondary texts so that it cannot be seen in isolation. He places both the programme and the viewer in an historical and social context.



viewers are not merely 'positioned' by television: they are also positioned in society and in history, and will therefore bring different kinds of prior knowledge to the text. As a result they may refuse to accept, or indeed, fail to perceive, the 'invitations' which the text offers.

(ibid, 1987: 115).

He uses the metaphor of a game. In the game of soap opera the viewers are the main players and are fully aware that they are playing a game; and yet they are continually extending it. However, the rules, although flexible, are set by the programme makers. The enjoyment of the game is multiple. It is to do with the revealing of secrets, in particular for children, and the view this gives them into the adult world. It offers possibilities for gossip with friends and family that is relevant to their own everyday lives.

With increasing concern about transnational television and the homogenisation of culture, audience research also turned its attention to cross cultural concerns. Ang's study of Dutch audiences of Dallas (1985) (and Liebes and Katz (1991) study of the same programme) makes the point that realism is not predominantly a matter of geography, fact and visual similarity. She argues that the emotions and relationships of the family lives portrayed, which are central to soap narratives, create a powerful empathy that becomes more important than the obvious differences in geographical or economic lifestyles (Ang, 1985). This line of argument is also followed in Miller's (1992) study of audiences of The Young and the Restless in Trinidad. As Moores states: "It was an emotional resonance which made the fiction real and pleasurable for them" (Moores, 1993a: 44).

These studies revealed not only what viewers felt and thought about what they viewed but also revealed aspects of viewers' identities and their relationship with their world. It became clear that TV formed the basis of much social interaction not only to confirm individual, group and national identities but also to form them (Scannell 1989; Bausinger, 1984; Lull, 1991). However, in light of this, methodological problems became clear. The most common approach to audience research for a long time has been the in depth interview and focus group interviews both of which have limited the kind of access the researcher has to the everyday practices and to the language and communicative practices

that are of central interest. In recent years there has been a turn to more ethnographically styled methods. I have discussed these issues in Chapter 6 in relation to the approach I have chosen to take in this study but they are still an important point of debate within Cultural Studies internationally that has not been resolved.

In this brief outline I have focused on the main elements of audience research that are of particular significance for this study and which place it within British Cultural Studies. The ways in which television is structured and broadcast reflects structural global and national powers. This centrally affects the ways in which audiences read it. However, what we bring to the watching, our 'cultural capital', is different according to our history and circumstance and the social context of watching and talking about it. It is through TV talk that identities are formed and the relationship between the micro and macro spheres of our social worlds are negotiated and interpreted. But since these elements of text, reader, social context and media institution are never stable such studies are both historically and socially situated and specific. Taking this approach as a starting point this study is about children and so in the next section I concentrate on relevant studies in child audience research.

### **(iii) Children and television audience research**

There is a growing number of child audience studies within Media and Cultural Studies. These studies have wrested the debate about children and television away from the paradigms of 'effects' and 'needs' and placed it within 'social worlds' and the discussions of identity and culture outlined above. This has happened in parallel with the work within the Sociology of Childhood. In this section I concentrate on three areas that are directly relevant to this study in which these developments have challenged accepted 'common sense' notions of and adult concern about the relationship between children and the media. First, there is the debate about what children should watch on television, what they understand and how much 'reality' they should be exposed to. Secondly, children watch television and talk about it mostly because they enjoy it. It evokes different emotions and pleasures and can often be a very powerful experience. Adult concern then centres on the

effects of these emotional engagements. Thirdly, the news touches both these debates and is a problematic area both for children and adults. It is particularly important for my study as it forms an important means of keeping contact with where families have come from and therefore is part of children's everyday home lives.

**(a) Who defines real life?**

Early studies by Palmer (1986) and Hodge and Tripp (1986) influenced the focus away from linear effects and drew it into the more complex social world of the child and into considerations of how children enjoy and interpret television. The main thrust of Palmer's book The Lively Audience (1986) is to challenge the hold that 'effects' research has had on public debates about children and television. Using home and school observations, interviews and drawings, she positions the child firmly as 'social actor', an active interpreter of situations, not as passively determined by biology and environment. Despite its limitations in terms of depth and scope she shows how television is a central part of children's social lives, how they derive pleasure and enjoyment from their viewing and how it is actively used in forming identity and friendships. She raises the argument, taken up and extended by Hodge and Tripp (1986) that children of different ages will 'read' the same programme differently and will 'use' it appropriately for their age.

The second study relies heavily on socio-linguistic theory. In Children and Television (1986), Hodge and Tripp analyse both the verbal and visual messages of television and then analyse the TV talk through which children make meaning of television. Hodge and Tripp (1986) maintain, much along the same lines as the 'preferred' readings of Morley (1992), that one viewer does not necessarily perceive the 'internal' cues in the same way as another viewer and will therefore 'read' the text differently. This has particular relevance to debates about children and television for Hodge and Tripp argue that as children get older and are more aware of their social place and the wider world their transformational powers (abstraction, extrapolation, criticism and intervention) develop and their understanding becomes more complex and sophisticated.

Both these studies, from different perspectives, then raised the question as to how decisions can be made about what children 'should' watch and how much and what they should be exposed to. Questions of protection, and promoting self protection, became part of the debate about media literacy and media education. How much real life should children see and how much can they 'cope' with? However, as Buckingham states, the question is then "who defines 'real life' and who decides how far children should be exposed to it" (2000a)? Central to this is how we view the child and childhood. As we saw above such questions then become relative, changing and cultural. Buckingham takes this further in Children Talking Television (1993) to place it firmly in social practice.

a social theory of television literacy would begin by acknowledging that children's use of television is an integral part of the texture of their daily lives, and of their relationships with the family and the peer group. It would acknowledge that the competencies which are involved in making sense of television are not equally available, but socially distributed, and that they are intimately connected with the operation of social power... different social groups may employ different 'television literacies', or different modalities of literacy, which have different social and ideological functions and consequences.

(ibid:34)

Thus different children (as with adults) will address the same text in different ways according to the function they want the programme to perform and according to their own social and cultural context. This has implications for the meanings that children glean from different programmes and therefore for the ways in which reality is understood. Reality is determined both in terms of individual preoccupations, fears and resonance (internal) and also in terms of experience of the 'real' world of social relations and society (external). Buckingham's interest is to put the children's voice into these debates and to open the discussion to include wider discussions of the place of the child in our changing society. His argument is that discussions about reality at present address adult concerns. The question is: what reality really means here and whose realities and categories would these judgements be based on (adult or child)? Messenger Davies (1997) also stresses the point that children will often make different judgements from those of adults. Davies' argument is that adult decisions about programme suitability will therefore often not meet the interests of children.

However, while Buckingham addresses cultural differences of age between adults and children and mentions differences of class and ethnicity in this country, he does not address the global picture of culture and cultural difference. This is surprising bearing in mind the emphasis placed on social worlds and the cultural constructions of reality and emotion. In terms of this study it is questions of diversity and how multiple differences of text, context and experience are negotiated through TV talk that is of interest. If the text is constructed within a historical, cultural and political framework, as a Cultural Studies approach would have it, and if viewers bring to the text their own cultural and social experiences we need to take this into consideration. For example, a Somali child steeped in a very particular oral tradition will bring to mainstream television different expectations from a Bengali child who is familiar with a different narrative form from the more linear western tradition (Moore, 1993). In the same way a text produced within an Islamic religious context will often be radically different both in narrative and visual form and be received differently by different children according to their particular cultural and religious contexts. With increasing satellite and cable specialist programming these issues are becoming more important. When the child audience increasingly includes a mix of children from a wide and diverse cultural experience, there needs to be room for the discussion of different reality interpretations if a commitment to media literacy as social practice is to be meaningful.

### **Pleasures and emotions**

While fantasy and emotion are the celebrated core of the study of literature these same elements are rationalised and explained away in an attempt to 'protect' the child in relation to the moving image (Buckingham, 1996; Messenger Davies, 1997). Although they take very different approaches and focus on very different ages they are united in their criticism of the narrowness of the debate in relation to children, television and emotions. Their point is that if pleasure and fantasy are important elements for children in watching television, as much research shows, then these factors need to become central considerations in the general debate about children and television.

Consistent with his previous work Buckingham (1996) keeps his analysis of emotions strictly within the social world and an important part of identity formation. Emotion itself is then a social construct.

Talking about our emotional responses should be seen as a social performance, a form of social conduct, which may involve the trying on of emotional 'roles'... The meaning of emotion, then, is established in the public realm of dialogue: it is bound to be provisional and inconsistent, and will often be contested. In a sense, therefore, we need to look at what emotions do in the context of social interactions, and at the ways in which the rhetoric of emotions serves to persuade others that one's claims to a particular identity are valid and legitimate.

(ibid: 59)

Consistent with this approach is the point raised by children in Buckingham's study in relation to reality and experience. The issue was not whether something on television was real or not but rather whether you had enough experience of the world to put the reality portrayed on television into a context of your own experience of real life. In this sense the feeling expressed by children was that this was the main factor for younger children (a common displacement) in making television scary or upsetting. As Buckingham states:

...such feelings (of distress) may be a consequence not of a belief in the reality of what is shown, but of an imaginative attempt to 'translate' the events of the text across to one's own life.

(ibid: 163)

This will have implications for children from very different backgrounds or indeed for those who are in the process of negotiating new contexts for their lives as in my study. Tobin (2000) addresses this issue in relation to the ways in which children interpreted potentially racist texts. Children read the text and reacted to it differently according to their own life contexts and experiences. Thus children argued that being reassured by parents that what they were scared of on the screen was not real but simply constructed for television didn't really help and in many senses was not the issue. What was at issue was the possibility of internal negotiation and accommodation of mismatched ideas and feelings.

Soaps for example address both of these last points. They are fascinating for children as they offer a view into an adult world (Buckingham 1987) touching their fears, offering ways of considering many family and relationship issues that can be related to what is happening or what is talked about in real life. Yet while their formulaic construction makes them safe, for them to perform the functions of real life it is essential to pretend that they are not constructed. Buckingham takes up the point in Moving Images (1996) that develops on the emotional resonances that soaps can make across culture (Ang, 1985, 1996; Miller, 1992) to consider the ways in which soaps offer the opportunity of public display of emotion or, for children, an arena for trying out emotions publicly.

These questions of emotions and fears have preoccupied other researchers. Laidler (1998) discusses the pleasures of watching A Nightmare on Elm Street. While stressing that one major pleasure was to watch with friends as a social experience, a major role of horror for children (and incidentally for adults) appears to be the test of courage, and overcoming and surviving the fear. Howard (1998) also highlights the combination of the social and the emotional in her discussion of the ways in which television fiction appears to provoke more talk about reality than non fiction programmes. However she, like Messenger Davies (1997), also stresses this in relation to cognitive development. Howard (1998) sees the talk that surrounds television as children's way of resolving 'cognitive confusion', of reaching a place where internal confusion can be resolved, and an accommodation made that will either assimilate the new feelings or information into the old, or reconfigure the old to accommodate the new.

This is an area that requires new approaches and that research at present has only dabbled on the surface of, remaining either too much within the deeply disturbed emotional or stressing the social over any other consideration. This is a point that Buckingham himself acknowledges.

there is a risk here of reducing displays of emotion to a kind of dramatic role-playing which is wholly determined by social context. Yet the question of why people choose to adopt particular social roles – and indeed why they choose to undergo certain emotional experiences – cannot be so easily swept aside... This kind of question cannot easily be

answered in sociological terms... although psychological explanations which are based on notions of individual pathology are scarcely more helpful...As I have argued, audience research in this field has generally manifested a 'cognitive bias', in which emotion is either defined in terms of generalised categories such as 'fright' or enjoyment', or simply neglected altogether. Yet continuing to rely on talk as a primary method of investigation may do little to displace this: it may be that more innovative methods are required in order to gain access to the subjective investments and personal histories that may be at stake.  
(Buckingham 1996:312)

Such considerations remind us of the problems within the sociology of childhood where a potential narrowness of approach is in danger of limiting our understanding of a very complex field.

In terms of this study these debates are important in several ways. Different cultures display emotions in different ways. Within cultures this is also affected by age and gender. For children new to the culture, for example, soaps could play a double role of representing both what social relationships and emotions are allowed in their new social context and in what forms these are enacted. TV talk about such programmes allows a playing field for trying out these new performances and understanding others. Another area that I will touch on is the ways in which children use television in attempts to resolve emotional conflict often brought about through their refugee and migrant experiences and how TV talk and practical media research approaches can become a window on these negotiations.

### **(c) News**

The ways in which news has been considered in relation to children again demonstrates the ways in which an adult agenda has dominated the debate about children and television. News is considered both an adult genre but also one increasingly that, in relation to children, is important and necessary for citizenship and inclusion. From a child perspective there are confusing reactions that both speak the adult agenda of news being important and necessary but also of it being boring and not to be watched. What do these contradictory statements add up to? The fact is that children do watch the news. Even if they do not



choose to, news broadcasts are often on when they are around. There are two aspects to considering the news both of which are important in relation to my study and which have particular implications for refugee and or migrant children and for globalisation. Firstly linked to the debate above about emotions, the ways in which children react to and are affected by news and secondly within the discourse of citizenship and political inclusion, the ways in which children consider news to be important for their own education and knowledge about the world. Raising questions about the role of news beyond information transfer, demands considering the role of news differently. The ways in which news items are composed, what narratives and images they use, how, and if, they are informationally contextualised and the ways in which news forms part of our daily, socially contextualised life all become issues as we saw in Chapter 1 (Bauman , 1998).

In The Making of Citizens (2000b) Buckingham demonstrates that being familiar with the news is seen as part of growing up, dealing with adult issues and being part of the public sphere. The emotional difficulties evoked are part and parcel of this need to know. He stresses the ways in which particularly local news directly affects children's sense of safety and restricts especially girls' geographical movements. However, what The Making of Citizens does not address is the way in which for some children starvation, war and trauma are not far away events but part of their realities. Watching the news then becomes a different experience. What you see is what you have experienced or what people you know are currently experiencing. Again the accepted view is one in which the child is essentially 'safe' within a western concept of life and childhood. If this is not the case how do children then relate to the public sphere or to news itself? There is also a presumption of similar news interpretations in this debate. In an increasingly global news environment, while mainstream news will offer roughly an agreed menu and 'position', children are increasingly aware of the ways in which news will differ. What they and their families watch could well be taking a radically different political, religious or social position from the western mainstream. Again questions of difference and diversity in this case both of the text, the audience and of the public sphere itself need to be addressed.

This study begins to address some of these issues. It looks at how children from very diverse backgrounds, often with refugee experiences, discuss the news with each other and bring their own experiences to bear in these discussions. It also examines the emotional and social effects of specific events, and the ways they are portrayed on the news, on particular children.

Finally I would like to draw together some of the points I have been making in this section. The three studies that I have focused on by Buckingham (Children Talking Television, Moving Images, The Making of Citizens) address different parts of the debate about children and television. Together they form a powerful platform for turning the debate around. They centralise children and challenge the ways in which adult conceptions of childhood have dominated the debate. By placing television within the social worlds of the child we move away from a sterile technological determinism while also addressing issues of what social world and public sphere children are allowed to enter or create. They have also placed media and the ways in which childhood is mediated into the foreground. However, there are ways in which the debates about children and television do not fully include issues of cultural difference and diversity, emotions and globalisation in the details of children's everyday lives and relationships. This is particularly true when considering issues of social inclusion, and I have indicated areas in which this study aims to address these gaps.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have looked at concepts of childhood and at the difficulties of including ideas of difference within that. I have considered the ways in which the sociology of childhood ignores the mediated nature of childhood especially in today's technological world. I outline a cultural studies approach to audience research and the ways in which our media lives cannot be separated from everyday social interaction. Television forms an important part of children's social relations and identity formations. Talk about television involves discussions and explorations about reality. It is a place in which emotions are displayed and allowed. It acts as a window on the world but also a platform for intricate

but everyday social practice. It is a place in which children negotiate a place in the world. As such it is a powerful vehicle through which children feel included in social and cultural spheres or through which they can be excluded.

## **CHAPTER 4      MIGRATION, MEDIA AND YOUTH: RECENT STUDIES**

### **Introduction**

The emphasis of this chapter is on the empirical studies in which the media are used by migrant adults and youth to form a sense of locality, a sense of place and belonging as a major part of identity formations across culture. This does not imply simply one connection to one geographical place but, in the more complex sense of localities that migration and global communications demand, it means connections in different ways to different places and communities. It demands in Morley's terms being 'multi-domestic' (Morley and Robins, 1995:119). The balancing of loyalties to these different localities is key to successful 'inclusion'. Unfortunately there have been very few studies carried out about everyday media uses in the context of the experience of migration and none done specifically in relation to children.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first considers the ways in which media are categorised in terms of different stages of migration and looks at the different terminology that is used in this new and expanding field. The second section focuses on studies done about ethnic minority uses of mainstream media. The main study here is Marie Gillespie's study of the media uses of Punjabi youth in Southall (1995) and how these operate in relation to their identity formations and sense of belonging as settled second generation British Asians. The third section takes up some of the themes raised to look at more recent studies of several different communities' uses, particularly of satellite and cable media. These studies raise issues of settling and inclusion but also of participation in different local and transnational communities.

### **(i) Categories and terminology**

Wood and King (2001) outline three aspects of the media in relation to migration. Firstly media images act as a source of information about the 'destination' country. These images

can act as encouragement for those seeking a better life. These would rarely be the only reason to start the journey but they can act to make the destination country more real and inviting. Secondly, as we saw in Chapter 2 media images and representations of immigration and migrants in the destination countries set the tone and the social climate into which the migrant arrives and lives. Finally, transnational media received from the countries of origin and minority and ethnic media within the host country affect the politics and identity of migrants and diasporas. If media are part of everyday life and consumption, as I argued in the previous chapter, it follows that media operate in different ways in the different stages of migration: leaving, arriving, settling, participation. As well as holding an awareness of the myriad differences that are contained within the migrant experience itself, we also need to hold an awareness of the ways in which the media weave themselves throughout that experience.

However, in their collection King and Wood (2001) omit several key aspects of the equation. In relation to the media of the destination countries they only consider news reports, dealing directly with migration issues. They concentrate on print media on the grounds that the newspapers set the tone that the visual media take their lead from. While this may be true, there are other ways in which the media set the tone for reception. Hargreaves (2001) contrasts the way in which issues of ethnic relations in France are contained within news and political programmes while in England they are also part of many dramas and soaps. However, this important issue is not developed. In addition there is no discussion of migrants' use of mainstream media themselves and the ways in which these can act as mediating cultural forms in the development of identity and sense of place. In a sense migrants here are depicted as passive recipients of an unfriendly host media.

One of the problems is that terminology is used differently in each study. As the technology changes and the nature of migration changes so the meanings of the related terms will shift. For example, diasporic media is often used to mean the same as transnational media and both are sometimes described as minority or ethnic media. Naficy (1993) is an exception here. He looks at the media uses of the exile Iranian community in Los Angeles shortly after the overthrow of the Shah. He outlines three forms of what he terms 'exilic' media that reflect

the different stages and needs of migrants: ethnic media produced in the host country by long established minorities that address issues in the host country itself; transnational media that originate from and focus on the country of origin; and exilic media produced by recent exiles in the host country that address the transitional state of recent migrants. A major feature of studies of migrant media is the way in which they stress the differences contained in the experience of migration, particularly of generation and gender, and how these differences affect media consumption.

In the main I follow the terms adopted by the different studies themselves in describing them but it is necessary for me to outline how I have come to define terms and think of the different media for my own analysis. Broadly speaking I see media in this area grouped (as Naficy does) in terms of the different broad functions they perform although their audience use is not necessarily limited only to this function. 'Ethnic' media address specific ethnic community concerns, often in their language/s of origin, often with a greater focus on cultural concerns of heritage maintenance of greater interest for the older generation and are produced in the main in the host country. They therefore tend to be more local.

'Transnational' or 'diasporic' media address the wider diasporic community, generally with a focus on the country of origin. Although programmes are often not produced from there.

'Minority' media include both those products with a targeted minority audience which are broadcast on mainstream media as well as those within ethnic media which address issues of inclusion and multiculturalism, of more concern to the younger generation. 'Global' media include the outputs of transnational media corporations such as CNN and Sky, and increasingly national broadcasters such as the BBC who do cater for both minority and transnational audiences in different ways. Those programmes are watched globally through many different broadcast channels.

## **(ii) Ethnic minority uses of mainstream media**

A study commissioned jointly by the Independent Television Commission and Broadcasting Standards Commission (Sreberny, 1999) illustrates the concern that media regulators and politicians have about the role of media in promoting or hindering social inclusion. This

report prioritises the opinions of teenagers in its examination of the ways in which ethnic minorities use and feel represented by the media. Based on focus group interviews with Asian, Afro-Caribbean and white youth in three UK centres it makes several useful points relevant to this study. Mainstream terrestrial broadcasts of soaps and comedies were the respondents' chosen viewing preference although they acknowledged that their parental and family viewing included ethnic and transnational cable and satellite programmes. They felt that television lagged behind reality in its representation of the complexity and diversity of the multicultural relationships that exist in everyday life. One major consideration here, also reflected in the ethnic categorisation of the study's own design, was the simplistic way in which ethnic minorities are categorised. There is little awareness of the crossovers of nation, region, religion, class and language and little awareness of the differences and crossovers contained under the broad categories of Asian, Afro-Caribbean and, indeed, white.

Ross (2000) outlines another study, this time commissioned by the BBC, which broadly supports the findings of the ITC report. She stresses:

What participants in this study want... is an acknowledgement of not only their similarities and differences to white Britons, but also those which exist among and between themselves, to mark out their own distinctiveness from all the others who might be bracketed together under the generic term 'black' or 'Asian'.

(ibid:145)

Many of the youth expressed a concern that with the expansion of narrowcast broadcasting, there is a danger that communities will become more separated and that terrestrial mainstream television will cease to feel the need to reflect the multicultural realities of everyday life in the UK. A particular concern was that if mainstream broadcasters no longer had responsibility for including ethnic minority representation and interests in their programming, white people would become more ignorant of the multicultural realities of life in the UK today. This would then have negative consequences for community and national life. This is part of a general dilemma that results from fragmentation of the audience due to multi-channel media but has a particular importance here in relation to inclusion. There is clearly a market for specialist minority language and transnational ethnic broadcasting that

will promote transnational communities. Producers are keen to utilise this commercially. The youth in this study recognised that it could reflect the different cultural and identity formations that they live with. However, at the same time the multicultural representation that terrestrial television could promote is recognised as vital for the maintenance and promotion of a shared public sphere. Its importance in terms again of national narration was acknowledged.

Considering its importance, there have been surprisingly few studies carried out in this area. Gillespie's study therefore stands out and is frequently referred to. She explores the details of the role media play in the lives of the Punjabi youth in Southall, "not only to lubricate their daily social interactions, but also to compare and contrast, judge and evaluate the culturally different social worlds that appear on their screens". (Gillespie, 2000:164). In addition she maintains that, "TV talk, though seemingly trivial and inconsequential, is enacted in a variety of private and public arenas, and in some cases constitutes an embryonic public sphere" (ibid:165). It offers an invaluable context in which to place the other two studies mentioned in this section. All three confirm that while minority and ethnic media play an important role mainstream media are still mainstream for minority ethnic audiences and as such have implications for the formations of national identities and understanding across cultures.

Gillespie conducted the fieldwork for the study between 1988 and 1991, before the major take-up of satellite television. She concentrates on mainstream television uses along with family viewing of Hindi videos. Videos remain an important part of diasporic media uses in some, particularly Asian, communities. With the arrival of Asian satellite and cable channels such as Zee TV, the broad picture of television viewing would have changed considerably since this study was conducted. However, we need to be aware that in many respects thinking about ethnicity and culture has also moved on. Importantly Gillespie's study takes up and centralises the debate about the multiple uses of the media in identity formation and in the formation of new ethnicities.

Many of the themes that emerge are also considered in the smaller scale studies I consider in the next section. These include intergenerational conflict, the role of news, loyalty to local



ethnic radio stations, feelings of alienation, a striving for a new path, distinct from their parents, and a mixed use of available media. In considering some of these issues, Gillespie takes three main themes and brings them together: media consumption as a central part of everyday living; the formation of hybrid identities; and ethnographic methodology applied to audience research. I will look at the first two of these below.

#### **(a) Media consumption and everyday life**

Following de Certeau, Gillespie argues that audiences use media actively to create spaces where they use the representations supplied by the powerful through the media and re-appropriate them, thus reclaiming some power themselves. While recognising the inequalities of distribution and access, she claims that consumers are creative users of media products. Gillespie concentrates on specific media genres and how they are talked about in peer groups. She prioritises mainstream television: national news, soaps and advertising. She also looks at family viewing to highlight generational differences and focuses on one family's viewing of Hindi films and of two contrasting portrayals of the religious text, the Mahabharata. She focuses on young people's struggles to form identities that incorporate both their parents' lives and values as well as what they perceive (through their media contact) to be western and modern and of the future.

The most interesting sections for my study are those dealing with the family viewing and TV talk surrounding Hindi films and the soap Neighbours. Here Gillespie illustrates the ways in which these genres allow the youth in her study to discuss their current lives, loves and families. Despite the obvious differences between their Southall lives and those depicted in the Australian soap there is, she claims, a deep homology of kinship and values between them. These sections in particular, support the argument that media talk has become an important place for young people to compare and contrast their lives with those of others. It is a shared space in which to talk about the personal at a distance and to negotiate new identities, transforming the old through the meeting of new ideas. Gillespie generalises from the youth in her study and implies that these changes are not only to do with individuals or small groups but are also central to wider cultural changes.

Deliberately, the cultural changes she focuses on are only seen in relation to media consumption and not in relation to other aspects of contact with the host culture. However, in my view the questions she asks in relation to consumption and sense of place create a major problem as they ignore considerations of other factors. At several points in the book she mentions Southall's isolation from the host culture. She states that the young people she spoke to said they did not experience racism unless they went outside Southall. However she does not question the effects of that segregation on the youth and community except in relation to specific news events and their media coverage. She focuses on the media as the only vision these youths have of other cultures but the question remains as to what cultural representations those are, how they themselves relate to the host nation or the local host cultures and how this affects their everyday lives. As the youth in the ITC report (Sreberny, 2000) pointed out there is little consideration in the media of the complexity of the crossovers of class and religion and of the multiculturalism of much British life. The only national voice or representation the youth in Gillespie's study appear to encounter is that of the national news, about which, as she clearly states, there are extremely complex feelings of loyalty on many issues that touch religion, race and Indian politics. Yet the role of the school itself as an important symbol and reflection of the host culture, is not acknowledged. At the very least, it is interesting that the youth themselves do not appear to consider it in this light. Gillespie's approach effectively isolates media use from other aspects of everyday life, and does not analyse these media representations themselves. This has major implications for how we then analyse the ways media influence formations of locality and identity.

#### **(b) New ethnicities and hybridity**

Gillespie's study reflects elements of the 'new ethnicities' project discussed in Chapter 2, and is vulnerable to some of the same criticisms made there. In celebrating the creativity and survival of diasporas and migrants there is a danger that we lose the structural realities of racism within the dominant culture. Gillespie (1995) does not adequately contextualise or problematise the situation and is rather too celebratory, although in other subsequent writing she does temper this (Gillespie, 2000). For example, the youths' favourite viewing is dominated by American oriented global media. The country they would most like to visit is the USA. Their mixture of local, transnational and minority media consumption is seen to

encourage the formation of a new ethnicity. Yet their feelings of exclusion and isolation from UK dominant culture are not added to the equation that Gillespie (1995) sets out. It seems to me that the fundamental split or division is not religion but the lack of opportunity for participation beyond their geographical and cultural locality. Their media lives and talk reflect this alienation and their awareness of their exclusion.

However this remains unacknowledged in the main thrust of Gillespie's argument and in some of the analysis of the data. For example she claims that the youth do not understand much of the news but on several occasions the talk she sets out demonstrates the opposite. Her reading of the talk does not always take on board the various ways that deep feelings of exclusion and disagreement can be expressed through humour, irony, chat and distancing. During her fieldwork the Gulf war was taking place and she relates this incident.

Some enjoyed pointing out ironies in the situation, in this case incidentally implying a disidentification with the British nation: 'Britain built all these bunkers for Iraq and now (laughs) the silly bastards can't even blow up their own bunkers.' Such casual and light-hearted talk was typical of the very competitive style of interaction among some boys for whom scoring a point or 'having a laugh' in an all male peer context takes precedence or who would be seriously challenged by any deeper or more serious discussion of the issues. (ibid:133)

What Gillespie appears not to recognise here is the critical role of the humour (Banaji, 2001). The speaker demonstrates knowledge of the conflict and a criticism of Britain's role in it. The tone is one of critical irony and does indeed distance the speaker from any association with Britain. It also distances him from the white adult researcher. But it is not necessarily light hearted point scoring. Rather it could demonstrate a genuine alienation and a sense that criticism would not, in any case, be taken seriously.

This brings us back to the criticism of the new ethnicities project that I made in Chapter 2 where the pain and difficulties involved in the formation of new hybrid identities are often lost in the celebration of creativity. In a sense I feel this is not so much the creation of something new and original, as a matter of creative survival. Set within the structural context

of exclusion the adaptations made by the youth Gillespie studies are brave, knowledgeable, in some senses inevitable but in so many ways difficult, painful and accommodating and therefore compromising. Matched with an equal adaptability on the part of the host community, these changes would ring a more optimistic note.

Despite these criticisms Gillespie's study remains central in drawing together different academic disciplines that touch the three areas of audience studies, identity politics and ethnography. It is especially important in terms of my research as it highlights young people.

### **(iii) Minority uses of ethnic, minority and transnational media**

As satellite and cable television has expanded we have seen an increase in research interest in ethnic minority media uses. Most of these studies have concentrated on studying separate ethnic community media almost in isolation from the wider community. Increasingly, however, there is a debate about the role of minority media in the public sphere more broadly. Silverstone (2001) takes a broad view of minority media in relation to what he terms the global commons which "defines and is defined by the availability in media and cyberspace of spectrum or network free of direct control by the forces of capital or the state" (ibid:14). In describing this he uses the metaphor of the enclosures of common land in medieval times.

Silverstone's starting points are useful to any consideration of global media and minority media in particular. They are that the media are central to any analysis of global living, an argument I have covered in Chapter 1. Secondly, that "the process of global and globalising mediation is, in the broadest sense of the term, a political process, historically conditioned, sociologically contested and driven by various contradictory longings and ambitions: for profit, for identity, for community" (ibid:13). This notion of the importance of global media for the realisation of identity and community is the core of this chapter. Third, that while finding a media voice for minorities is the first stage (access), the importance lies in that voice being heard (effective access). Being heard involves an awareness and an address to those beyond your immediate circle and an ability on the part of others to attend to that

address (Bauman, 1998; Morley and Robins 1995). This again is central to the idea of the media as facilitating communication between and across cultures. Silverstone's (2001) concern is that mere access to the technology and the spectrum will not ensure participation in the 'global commons'. Whether this happens or whether minority media act only to separate and, while ironically using global communications, to pull people back into traditional locations and beliefs is a question that all the studies of minority media address in some way. My problem with many of these studies is that while the underlying concern is with how they function for community maintenance and development, the notion of 'community' is ill defined, or rather only ethnically defined. Thus the needs of, or the development of, Silverstone's virtual 'global commons' or Bauman's more geographical local community are not addressed. It is the analysis of communication across and through difference that is lacking.

At the time that Naficy (1993) carried out his study of Iranian exiles in Los Angeles and their media uses, the assumption of the day was that media was primarily a homogenising force. He was concerned to show a more complex picture. He tracks the psychological and social routes that these exiles made at different stages in their migration and settling through their uses of different media forms. He is careful to point out that Iranian exiles at that time were generally middle class and pro-Shah and that the media would reflect this. A study of this kind conducted now would indeed reflect a different community, as is the case with Sreberny's (2000) account of the different, often conflicting, Iranian communities in London. The tendency now is to talk of diasporic media reflecting the ways in which the communication takes place between several countries and several connected international communities. But it is useful to question this and not too easily apply the term diasporic to all refugee and migrant experience. As I have pointed out in Chapter 1, exile is often a much more individualistic experience. Individual media uses reflect these personal and community differences and transformations.

A more recent concern in relation to transnational media and the expansion of satellite television take up has been that they will undermine the process of assimilation in the new country and encourage migrants to maintain loyalties to their countries of origin and not

build new affiliations. Again a more complex picture has emerged from several studies. This is an issue that Hargreaves and Mahdjoub (1997) have addressed in relation to families of Maghrebi origin in France. What they found was that viewing was diverse. Most families kept the main television in the living room connected to satellite but many of the younger generation watched French television in their bedrooms. Family viewing usually centred on satellite broadcasts and this became the focus of much family power politics, with the father often dominating viewing choices. Most of the fathers preferred to watch sports on satellite. Both parents and children felt more comfortable watching broadcasts from their countries or region together, as there were no moral conflicts over sex and the portrayal of sexual relationships. However, all family members also watched French television. Hargreaves and Mahdjoub (ibid) also found that second generation children often preferred to watch US based programmes when on their own and, when their parents were out, sometimes moved the satellite dish in order to receive these without their parents' knowledge. However, on the whole, they state that while the research offered some evidence of the formation of what Appadurai (1990) terms 'ethnoscapes' through the use of media

it would nevertheless be a mistake to infer from this that minority ethnic families equipped with satellite dishes are bound together in a shared cultural project dominated by the parents' home country. On the contrary, there is now greater diversity than previously in both individual and family viewing patterns.

(Hargreaves and Mahdjoub, 1997:473)

Hargreaves and Mahdjoub concentrate on generational differences in viewing patterns and preferences. Older first generation migrants were more interested in programmes from the home country and culture, although the second generation, while showing an interest in and loyalty to the country of origin, were more interested in French and American programming. This generational difference is echoed in other studies.

Tsagarousianou (2001) takes the theme of 'home' and the creation of 'home' in a study of Greek Cypriots and South Asians living in South London. The question she asks is what role diasporic media play in the creation of a sense of home. In a similar way to Naficy (1993) she describes the rituals surrounding the preparation for and the watching of programmes or

listening to radio broadcasts from the country of origin. These contacts combat the feelings of isolation (both physical and emotional) that living in the new place evoke. But the contacts with the country of origin are just as important as the contacts with others from the same country now living in other countries. She refers to the common diasporic experience that this can bring despite the fact that these 're-imagined' communities often replicate the conflicts and power struggles of back home that might have encouraged their original migration. What is important for these respondents is that they are able to identify with, and participate in, these matters, however uncomfortable, while issues in the host countries feel more distant.

As in Naficy's study the second generation migrants were less focused on transnational media and more on minority media in the host country. However, in both cases, they were critical of the lack of professionalism of this material and also felt that their needs were not being met. They felt that the needs of their parents were taking preference. This, alongside the sense of exclusion from the host media, meant they felt a double exclusion. In some sense their loyalty to diasporic media, even while criticising it, was an expression of their exclusion from the mainstream and a sense that citizenship in the new country was being denied to them.

Ogan (2001) takes this further in her study of the communication uses in Holland of a particular Islamic group, Milli Goerue's ("the Turks who live in Europe and who are involved with an Islamic political organisation that seeks to re-establish a more 'Islamically-oriented state in Turkey' and to maintain an Islamic perspective in every aspect of Turkish peoples lives in Europe" (ibid:127)). Her argument is that the second generation are not interested in their country of origin but also feel excluded from the host country. Their religion then becomes more important; joining them with a new community that crosses many borders and does include them. The mosque becomes a place of community and belonging, as much as religion. Their media choices follow these allegiances and rather than watching Turkish TV, they watch Islamic channels. The emphasis is not on the past and where they come from but on how to live with the present. While the organisation's stated

aim is change within Turkey, their main agenda is to create a more Islamic life for their community in Europe.

Tsagarousianou (2001) talks of the desire for a very local sense of belonging and notes that this is seen in the loyalty to specific local radio stations. One she mentions is a station that only broadcasts during Ramadan. She talks of the sense of intimacy that creates community and of the importance of building a relationship with the station itself, including the presenters, producers and managers. In the same way Naficy (1993) says that presenters in the media he studied worked at creating a sense of togetherness, of joint address, that created the intimacy the listeners sought in their media and a sense of communal public space.

A genre that appears to be of some importance is that of talk shows and talk radio. In relation to minority and ethnic media these shows play the role of allowing discussions about issues of settlement and change, especially where there are generational differences. Both Naficy (ibid) and Tsagarousianou (2001) see them as playing an important counselling role. In addition Milikowski (2000), in a Dutch study of Turkish second generation immigrants said that they felt these shows on mainstream television were the only place that their views or the views of other minorities were ever represented directly. The feeling that minority voices were only permitted to be heard through an intermediary is reflected in the study commissioned by the BBC mentioned above (Ross, 2000).

Finally in this section I would like to consider a study that attempt to set the question the other way round. Rather than asking to what extent minority media create a sense of ethnic community and belonging, Milikowski (2000) asks to what extent media can act to 'de-ethnicify'. Looking at the changing media climates as Aksoy and Robins (2009) did she challenges a fixed and separated idea of 'imagined communities'. Again she is addressing the concern that satellite television will work against assimilation into the host country by asking another question: whether transnational TV necessarily increases ethnic differences. She looks at the media in terms of how they can increase or decrease a sense of difference per se and secondly whether this sense of difference has social implications. She argues that while watching Turkish satellite television will increase Turkish language ability this, in itself, does



not either encourage or discourage the ability to participate in the public sphere. In her terms this is a neutral difference. However, Turkish television also shows Turkey to be a modern nation with many of the same problems as Holland. This is also highlighted by Aksoy and Robins (2000). Her second-generation viewers felt that rather than pulling them back to the 'home' country it showed their parents that things had changed at home as well. Many of the rules and norms that their parents were expecting them to conform to, in reaction to those they found in Holland and in an attempt to hold them within Turkish culture, were less a matter of culture than history. These restrictions applied to Dutch-Turkish youth no longer applied to youth in Turkey itself. By seeing modern Turkey depicted they felt less, rather than more, different from their Dutch peers. In her model Milikowski therefore claims that satellite TV functions not to ethnicify but rather to de-ethnicify. The question she does not address however in this argument is that of Dutch ethnicity. On the other hand many of her respondents stated that they felt unrepresented on Dutch TV (other than on chat shows) and therefore turned to Turkish TV. As we have seen Ogan (2001) takes this further and claims that this is encouraging a greater take up of Islamic programming.

These diverse studies both confirm the findings of earlier studies and also raise new questions that need to be addressed. The increasing range of available media is leading to a diversification of niche audiences but also to new demands especially on the part of youth. At the beginning of this section I raised the issue of whether and in what ways this allows us to move on from debates about assimilation and homogenisation without losing sight of the need for a global commons. What these studies confirm is that minority ethnic audiences use the available media in different ways to fulfil different generational, gender, cultural, communal and family needs. Mainstream media are still important, but there is a deep feeling of exclusion among youth both in terms of how ethnic minorities are represented and in terms of their lack of voice within it.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have considered how media work to create a sense of belonging and contribute to new conceptualisations of belonging and identity. I have looked at audience

studies that focus on ethnic minority uses of both mainstream and minority, ethnic and transnational media. These studies all focus on the ways in which media form part of everyday life and are now a central part of living in migration and with global connections. I have concentrated on Gillespie's (1995) study for several reasons. Firstly it is the only long term study based in this country that focuses on young people and their negotiations with the host and home cultures through their use of media and as part of their new identity formations as British Asian. It raises several interesting issues that subsequent studies have also explored in relation to other minorities in different European countries. Since that study was done Gillespie (2000) has herself developed its work studying and comparing audience responses to the Mahabharata in London and Delhi. In more local contexts Sreberny (2000) discussed the issue of the need to address the contexts of viewing in more situated research and the need to differentiate within ethnic communities.

One of my major concerns here is the ease with which race or ethnic difference is correlated with cultural difference. This concern is explored in relation to audience studies by Harindranath (2000) and by Milikowski (2000). Gerd Baumann (1996) sets out to study this question in depth. Like Gillespie his study is based in Southall, but not in relation to media. He set out to question the way in which ethnicity is used as the central descriptor in discussions of culture and community in this country. He avoided prioritising ethnicity and rather than focussing on one ethnic 'community' he studied various communities in one location. Thus he prefers to refer to 'Southallians' rather than any ethnic group. He identifies two discourses of culture operating in Southall. The 'dominant' discourse "relies on equating community, culture and ethnic identity". Social policy, funding decisions, national and local, are based on this discourse and, as a result, ethnic communities vie with each other for scarce funding.

However, this discourse is undermined in 'Southallians' everyday lives and social contacts. The second 'demotic' discourse separates community from culture and ethnicity. Community is acknowledged as being "processually constructed, rather than found" (ibid:189). The emphasis here is on the shifting nature of boundaries and the processes of change in the present. Baumann thus suggests that inclusion into the community is not absolute, but

negotiated in different ways at different times (and over time), through the demotic discourse. Morley (2000) describes this as a 'cultural continuum of belonging' (ibid: 244). This usefully moves us away from absolutes of inclusion or exclusion to a more continuous and changing view based on process. The central problem with the dominant discourse is that it denies agency and change and does not attend to the realities of people's everyday lives in geographical, social and historical locations.

This critique of the essentialising of ethnicities has important implications for considerations of the media and their role in the public sphere or the 'global commons' (Silverstone, 2001). Silverman's (2001) concern is that mere access to the media by the ethnic minorities will not ensure 'effective access' and the promotion of an inter-ethnic multi interest (Husband, 2000).

There is a strong sense in the studies considered in the third section that diversity is acceptable and allowed in the private sphere but not in the public sphere. Several of the studies that I have looked at in this chapter mention this in different ways. The young people in the ITC (Sreberny, 1999) report voiced a concern that if ethnic and minority interests were placed into niche markets mainstream media would address their interests even less and that this would be to the detriment of cross cultural relations. Young people in most of the studies felt that their experiences of living with different cultures and the development of cross cultural relations were not reflected in either the mainstream or the minority or ethnic media. Finally I must emphasise that while these studies included youth and I have tried to focus on their concerns very few included children and none prioritised them.

## **CHAPTER 5 PLACING CHILDREN WITHIN THE THEMES AND QUESTIONS**

### **Introduction**

The last four chapters have outlined the fields within which this study is situated. These cover a vast terrain, only parts of which I have been able to explore here. In this account there are several key themes that overlap, weave through and inform each other, either in ways that are obviously apparent or in more subtle ways that maybe have not yet been adequately set out. This chapter aims to draw these themes together, to explore how they could help in understanding the media lives of the particular children in the particular school that forms the centre of this study. With reference to the title of this study, 'Television as a shared space in the intercultural lives of primary aged children', I will explore the gaps in existing research in the fields of media, children and migration that need to be addressed and that inform my research questions.

#### **(i) Thematics**

Chapter 1 set out the broad picture of the ways in which global relations have changed and are changing, largely, but not entirely, through the facilitating powers of the technological advances in communications media and travel. These changes have brought about a compression of time and space in our economic, informational and everyday personal lives. However, there is a danger of linking globalisation too closely with increased migration and celebrating global travel. We should not forget that migration has always been part of our lives and has always influenced our social structures, political and economic lives, often in very painful ways. The central theme here is that of locality, belonging and inter-relatedness in an increasingly globalised world. The events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 have brought this into sharp focus. One radio commentator stated that the destruction of the twin towers in New York marked the beginning of the end of globalisation, that it marked a complete realisation of the backlash globalisation has produced. The tensions between local and global concerns and powers have become acute.

For the children in this study these debates form the background of their daily lives and their developing allegiances. The school in which the study is based is long established, part of a national institution and forms the centre of diverse community connections. For many of the children it is the only place in which they mix and play. Within the locality it forms a distinct and mixed community with all the many tensions of any inner city school. Many of the families have lived in the area for many years and over several generations. They have strong community centres outside the school and also maintain diasporic links to elsewhere. Many, however, are new to the area and are finding their way in a new environment. Their children are, in a sense, on the front line between the past, the present and the future, between different locals and different allegiances. They are 'looking around'. The school is the place in which they meet the new others and negotiate their new lives.

Chapter 2 explored the themes of identity and belonging through discussions of diaspora, media representation of immigration and race and the concept of new ethnicities. There is a fundamental concern about the matching of an awareness of where we come from with where we are now, of how we live here in relation to how they live there. Again this concern has found a stronger, more immediate voice, since the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and been manifested in subsequent debate about national loyalty and the role of demonstrations of allegiance. In this country it has been the focus of debate in relation to the riots in Bradford during the summer of 2001. Media coverage often fans public panics in this area in relation to migrants, refugees and migration. Here the narrations of nation and what it is to be British are fixed and relate to an unreal past. A fundamental challenge to these notions came with the ways in which media have been used as a central platform in challenging racist representations, what it means to be British and in the creation of the concept of new ethnicities. Here we have a more immediate picture of the ways in which the local can be both inward looking and how this can be transformed. The meeting of the local and the global in everyday life means the meeting of difference, the meeting of the Other. As former U.S. President Clinton set out in his Dimpleby lecture, 2001, it is the challenge of the understanding of 'difference' that is at the centre of today's problems and at the centre of what could create their solutions. In this the media become a crucial and influential tool in

the creation, formation and transformation of identities that encompass and allow difference. While globalisation is not the cause of migration it has changed its nature and scale and thereby brought difference into everyone's everyday lives.

Both the school that forms the central location of this study and the children who attend it, operate within the context of the effects of an often hostile national press and an often difficult legal framework for refugees. The ethnic make-up of the school has changed radically over the years and now reflects the wide range of refugee and migrant global movement and changing diasporas rather than only the UK's colonial connections. The policies of the school are designed to encourage a sense of belonging and safety. Displays, events and outings offer positive images of diversity. But at the same time the school is clearly part of a wider national structure that is still uneasy with difference, and newcomers need to learn to negotiate this new territory. Discussions within the education sector about citizenship curricula mirror the wider debates about global and national inclusion and the problems of the recognition of difference. Within the school playground there are few areas of shared experience and children learn to negotiate, with the resources available, between what they experience at home and what they experience at school. Television is a key tool in these negotiations.

There is little if any real discussion of children and children's lives in these debates about globalisation, migration and difference. In Chapter 3 I explored how conceptualisations of childhood have developed in the UK. Placing children centre stage is important in analysing their agency in relation to their own lives and in discussing the ways in which they become the focus for public anxieties. However, the sociology of childhood in its present form is problematic in several ways and does not assist in analysing cross cultural relations or the mediated nature of childhood. Understanding the relationship between agency and structure is central to the studies of children's relationship to media. How they use TV talk in narrating their own experiences, in negotiating their social and societal relations and in the formation of identities is at the core of this study. However, the mediated nature of this dynamic has not been fully explored in relation to how children use media to explore inclusion across culture and in different aspects of their everyday lives in and out of school.

In the informal life of the school television talk permeates almost every aspect of social relations: games in the playground, songs, jokes, dinner talk, conflicts and friendships. It so pervades interaction that it is often unrecognised. However in the formal life of the school it almost ceases to exist and is often denigrated, driving it underground. The 'commonsense' concerns about the 'effects' of television that pervade public debate about children and television are clearly visible in the school life and much wider debate in education implies that part of the school's role is to counteract these effects. Education becomes a place where adult concepts of childhood are preserved and protected and underlying these is a eurocentric bias that excludes different ideas of childhood. The debate about citizenship has not yet addressed these conflicting dynamics and the role that the media play in this, both directly in children's lives and in reaction to it, has not been fully explored.

With increased globalisation and increasing migration, ethnic diversity has demanded both that mainstream media respond to new markets and that minority and ethnic media develop. This was explored in Chapter 4. Here the debate is both about the ways in which ethnic minorities use mainstream programming in settling into new cultures but also how it can include and reflect the multicultural nature of our society. Here we return to the public narration of what it means to be British today or indeed what it means to be British 'as well as'. The danger is that niche marketing will encourage not only diversity but separation, a reaffirming of separated ethnicities. The particular needs of the young who are already living with different cultures appear to be being ignored. So we return to debates about the relationship of local affiliations with those of the global, the need to facilitate access but more importantly participation through and in the media. The core question is how ethnicity is negotiated in the public commons, in what ways the media could facilitate or disrupt this and how new inclusive identities are formed.

Within the school community and the lives of the children in this study the need to be understood is part of everyday interaction between the children and between the adults and the children, both in school and in the home. What children watch on television at home and talk about, they also bring to school. How this is received and negotiated by their peers and

adults offers them a window on what the dominating discourses will include or exclude. Studying children's talk about television offers us a window on how they negotiate their differences and similarities in the formations of their own identities and cross cultural social relationships. It also offers insights into how they perceive their local and global connections.

So the central themes of my study are: the role that media play in the formation of children's social identities in multicultural settings; the relation between local experiences and global relationships in children's everyday lives; the negotiating and defining of difference through television talk; the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion as they are expressed and experienced through talk about media.

**From these and the discussions above I have developed my research questions:**

- 1) Children use television in processing and building their social worlds and in the formation of their identities. Where children are refugees/migrants, television becomes a site of social negotiations across cultural differences. This does not happen in cultural isolation. In what ways, therefore, does TV talk form the basis of cross-cultural social relations between children of primary school age?
- 2) Increasingly television is used to keep in touch with the countries refugee and migrant children have left and to maintain cultural contact with those places. Television talk becomes a significant forum through which children negotiate how much they are included or choose to be included in the host society and how much they maintain a connection with other societies. In that case what role does television play in the formation of identities and the creation of a sense of place/belonging and community for migrant /refugee families (especially children) in this country/community and with the country/community they have left?

There are, of course, many gaps in the fields outlined in Part 1. The increasing crossovers of academic disciplines and the changes occurring in society mean that this is a new and expanding area of study. This study aims to bring children and their everyday experiences of media and migration into clearer focus. By locating the study in one school and local community it aims to bring some of these discussions into the broad arena of education and community relations. By adopting an ethnographic styled methodology it aims to look at the details and nuances of these children's lives and to ground some of the broad theories in everyday realities. I am very aware, however, that while hopefully contributing to the field



and opening new space I will also be excluding crucial debates. Any study is always partial and limited and lays itself open to criticisms in the same way that I have criticised others. My research questions are thus formulated to allow an exploration of the field but they clearly place the study within an educational and age sector. They also place the study within Media and Cultural Studies work that focuses on culture, identity, narration of self and of belonging and thus within discussions of inclusion and exclusion.

## **PART 2**

### **CHAPTER 6 METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

My approach to the data collection and analysis grew out of the themes and questions set out in Chapter 5. The study would take place over a period of time and involve the gathering of different types of data with children, their families and friends from different backgrounds. As a researcher this would draw me into new relationships with the school community, the children and their families and demand a reflexive awareness of these dynamics during the study. To access the ways in which children 'do' identity and culture through TV talk, a participatory methodological approach was demanded. Foremost in all my thinking was the fact that children were the centre of my interest and that this made very particular demands. Thus both in approach and method the children needed to be the subjects rather than the objects of the research (Mauthner, 1997). This highlighted questions of consent, access, confidentiality and, underlying all these, power relations. In this chapter, then, I set out how I managed these different but complementary concerns and approaches through the data collection, analysis and writing of this thesis.

I began visiting the school which formed the central location of the study in early 1998. During the summer term I carried out a pilot study in order to clarify my approach and my research questions and in order to feel more at home in my new role as researcher. I spent time observing in the playground and in class. I interviewed several children both on their own and within friendship groups and visited some of their homes. I kept a field diary, transcribed the interviews and wrote it up focusing on methodological issues it raised. I then returned to the school after the summer break and spent the following academic year 'in the field' more or less intensively. The pilot study was invaluable in planning. I was aware of the need to build a form of organized approach but one that would essentially allow me to be surprised. I needed the research design to be itself a reflexive process that could enable me to move with the flow.

### **(i) Ethnography or ethnographically styled?**

The research questions centre around what happens in between ‘children’, ‘places’, ‘cultures’, ‘social worlds’. They are peppered with words of process: ‘formation’, ‘negotiation’, ‘maintenance’, ‘creation’. So the dilemma was to find ways in which to engage with some of these processes through the fieldwork, analysis and writing and make them visible. It would not be possible or desirable to pin them down as there can never be any final conclusion (Geertz, 1973) but rather to explore the connections and dynamics between them in new ways. From this basis the research had to focus more on the interactions between the children and the people, places and media in their lives than on individuals. It needed to make room for these interactions to change over time and context. It needed to take place in the different real settings of the children’s lives and to take account of the different power relations within which the social interactions take place. It needed therefore to take account of my own interactions with the children and their contexts.

Thus Geertz’ description of culture as “webs of significance” and analysis of these webs as “an interpretive science in search of meaning” drew me towards an ethnographically styled approach. The history and debates within and about ethnography in different academic disciplines also reflect many of the theoretical discussions outlined in the previous chapters. Ethnography has been associated with racist depictions of other peoples and societies. The rise of an anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist consciousness has challenged the portraits it has drawn and its right to draw them. Theoretical rethinking of research, texts and representation stemming from feminism and post-structuralism have challenged its claims to ‘truth’. Yet at the same time ethnography has been undergoing a process of deconstruction which has also influenced other disciplines. Ethnography is now no longer solely the domain of anthropology.

Clifford (1986) states that “Cultural analysis is always enmeshed in global movements of difference and power” (ibid: 22) and that as such ethnography is based on a “moving earth”. His influential book, Writing Culture, raises questions about the status of the ethnographic text as representation and about the power of the ethnographer in the creation of that text. The self reflexive role of the researcher becomes central: ‘Now ethnography encounters others in relation to itself while seeing itself as other’ (ibid: 23). It is through debates such as these that ethnography has been adopted and adapted by other disciplines especially Sociology and Cultural Studies. This was all in line with my thinking and provided me with an overall approach within which to work.

However, in reading about ethnography within different disciplines I began to need to differentiate method, methodology and epistemology (Maynard, 1994). Sociological textbooks about ethnography tend to focus on distinct methods of gathering data. Cultural Studies is drawn to ethnography through discussions of representation and text and power. Some television audience studies within Cultural Studies, however, have been criticised for claiming to do ethnographies while being based almost solely on in depth interviews (Nightingale, 1986). Pink (2001) argues that ethnography will change according to the discipline within which it is adopted. Thus my approach drew on ethnography. Compared with many audience studies it does fulfil many on the criteria with long term close contact with a specific group of people being a major feature. However, since I do not claim to have ‘lived with the people’ of the study and moved in and out more or less intensively I would prefer to describe it as ethnographically styled.

Within this description it also draws on the wider debates and reflections of what ethnography is and the role of the researcher in ethnography. This includes sensitivity to the contested nature of knowledge, ethical awareness, critical reflection, critical engagement with power relations, a desire to give ‘voice’ to the often voiceless. This is not the approach of a disengaged ‘objective’ researcher who adopts self reflexivity in order to neutralize the effects of the researcher (see Hammersley, 1992 and Siraj-Blatchford, 1994 on this debate). However, I am also concerned that too much self reflexivity and preoccupation with the relativity of research is in danger of making the subject of research

disappear and become merely the researcher's 'other'. My approach holds onto Clifford's view (1986) of ethnographic accounts as 'fictions' but it also holds to the need to keep cultural analysis in touch with the 'hard surfaces of life' and in particular its political, economic and social stratifications. In working to build the 'thick descriptions' contained in this study I am also trying to hold onto 'a recognition that the object of our would-be knowledge, while being entirely 'made up' is nonetheless 'real' for that (Morley, 1997:136). Thus I hope that at the end of the day the fictions I draw will have relevance, will open up new questions and will 'make a difference'.

## **(ii) Visual ethnography**

I had not planned to incorporate photography or video work into this study. However the thought kept recurring as I progressed with the fieldwork and especially with the group sessions that involved drawing and making posters. There were several reasons behind the move in this direction. Firstly I hoped that using visual technologies would encourage a wider ranging and freer discussion about television itself as a visual medium. I had become more and more aware of the ways in which the visual was incorporated in the children's everyday talk, gesture, drawings, language and narratives. To record these as written texts seemed inadequate. I also hoped that by giving the children the camera I would gain greater insights into how they saw their community and offer them an independent way of commenting on their everyday lives. Secondly if this group of children made a video that in some way represented them and the research work this could be shown to other children in the school and beyond as a form of triangulation. Finally I wanted to present the study not only through the written form that I would create from the data and the sound of my voice at presentations but to include the voices and visuals of the participants - the children. This approach felt more in line with my original intention.

However, videoing out and about in the community allowed me a view on how the children positioned themselves in relation to the wider community. Using animation allowed the children to use the distance of drawing and voice-over to talk about issues and tell personal stories in ways that had not occurred before and in ways their parents and

teachers had not heard before. They challenged the power dynamic between myself and the children. The children felt they participated in a more real project with a tangible end product of which they have kept copies. Parents and other children were able to make inputs in ways that would not otherwise been possible. Thus as Pink (2001) states ethnographic video and photographs can allow insights into how people position themselves in relation to wider discourses, world views, histories and identities. The videos became a vehicle for creating new knowledge and critique not only about children's relationship with particular topics or programmes on television (or their 'effects') (Gauntlett, 1996) but to television in their everyday lives, as my research questions and themes demanded. As with the other data I needed to view it on different levels but always in relation to the other forms of data.

To some extent, therefore, this study could be seen as an instance of a developing tradition of visual ethnography. The essence of ethnography is that it leads you into places and viewpoints you hadn't expected when you set out. Visual ethnography aims to move away from the supremacy of the written text. It includes photography, film and video. It has a long established history in both anthropology and sociology but has taken new forms and emphases in recent years. In line with the traditional approaches in both fields it has been attached to claims of objectivity and truth. An approach more in line with the one outlined above sees visuals as representations, reflecting aspects of the context in which the representation is made, the person who has formed the picture and the represented. Visuals are made up of the content but are also the fictional product of the context, of the intentions and subjectivities of those involved and of the meanings that the viewers individually and collectively bring to it. Thus visual ethnography is not so much a method of recording or illustrating text but as a medium for creating new knowledge and critiques and for gaining deeper thick descriptions (Goldman-Segal, 1998; Pink, 2001). Its focus is therefore both on the finished image and how it is viewed and interpreted and on the process of its creation and how that is viewed.

### **(iii) Consent, access and confidentiality**

Negotiating consent and access and ensuring confidentiality involve ethical issues in all social research. While these are particularly acute when working with children due to the unequal power relationships, primarily related to age, they can be eased by developing participatory approaches (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998; Mauthner, 1997). Much of the discussion in this area is difficult to theorise as it often comes down to a combination of common sense and appropriate methodology (Alderson, 1995; Solberg, 1996). Children themselves know about fairness, truth and what is right and wrong. The issue is to ensure that the researcher is asking appropriate questions and adopting effective methods in trying to answer them. The researcher needs to be aware of potential pitfalls and to ensure both the safety and integrity of the participants and of the research.

Consent and access at school level was easy to arrange as the school management and staff knew and trusted me as a former teacher at the school, and I was familiar to most of the children and parents. It also meant that I was familiar with the arrangements and ethos of the school and with the local neighbourhood and its problems. I arranged to meet the families of all the children I would be interviewing and working with. It was important to ensure that both parents and children were willing to participate and had the opportunity to ask questions and raise doubts before the research started. While a large amount of the research would be conducted within the school a primary aim of the project was to visit homes and involve other family members. In addition, in order to be able to take children out and about in the neighbourhood, I needed to be sure that parents were happy for this to happen. Individual families therefore were able to negotiate differing amounts of access.

Consent cannot be a simple one-off event but becomes almost a continuous process, involving both the formal initial consent as well as different levels of participation, demonstrating consent at different stages of the research (Fine and Sandstrom, 1988). Informed consent was then not only important at the initial stages of explaining the research profile but also explaining each stage of the research. This was particularly important as the fieldwork took place over a long period of time. This became complicated

in the cases where I needed to work through interpreters with the parents. In one particular case the interpreter did not appreciate the ways in which I was trying to involve the parents and was impatient with the details I was trying to get across. The parents gave consent for their children to participate but I felt both sides were left frustrated by the exchange. On other occasions, where the parents did not want an interpreter but where their level of English was not sophisticated I was not sure how much they had understood of the details and nuances of what I was doing. Again the consent was adequate but not ideal. This made it even more important to ensure that the children were well informed throughout the process.

In addition to individual consent a general letter was sent out informing all parents that I would be conducting research in the school. In some cases where the children were new to the school and the parents had little contact, problems of access did arise. For example, there was a newly arrived boy from Kosovo who I wanted very much to be part of the boys' group. The boy was very keen to participate but his father refused permission and also refused to meet with me or talk on the phone through the older son. This was at the height of the Kosovan war and clearly he had other concerns, one of them being their own family security. On the one hand I felt frustrated that the father was blocking his son's choice and this raised ethical questions in relation to children's rights and research (Mayall, 2000); although on the other, especially in these sensitive circumstances, the father was right to 'protect' his family. Throughout the fieldwork I was balancing sensitive issues related to the children's and families' past experience and present position as refugees.

Other refugee families were not such recent arrivals and even though their lives were difficult they were able to accommodate an outside request to some degree and saw it both as a way of making contact with the host community and also as an educational advantage for their child. Again it clearly helped that I was able to say I had been a teacher at the school and that I was well known in that setting. For those parents new to the school their first question was why I was doing it and what difference it would make. They wanted to have a direct practical outcome that would benefit their child. On two occasions I offered



individual help with reading in exchange for their participation. This was the first of many trade offs or exchanges, some recognised, others not, that took place during the field work and that are an inevitable part of ethnographic research. (Skeggs, 1994; Hey, 1997).

But even when everything appeared to be going smoothly, outside events could intervene and disrupt the process, provoking a new round of consent and access negotiations. For example I had spent some time with a Kurdish family when Ocalan, the Kurdish leader, was captured in Kenya. Suddenly the children began to view me with suspicion, connecting my tape recorder and questions with the police. In effect they withdrew their consent and I needed to change my approach and adapt to the ways in which this 'external' event had provoked renewed 'internal' distress.

There were other sensitive issues that arose in talking to the children and on several occasions I had to make ethical decisions about confidentiality and safety. The most extreme involved one of the girls, whose home life and relations with her mother and step father were often very difficult. This is an ongoing sensitive issue with all research involving children. The National Children's Bureau Guidelines for Research (1993) recommend that researchers ensure the child's safety by informing a professional who might be able to protect the child. After much thought and after considering the possibility of involving the child herself in such a decision (Alderson, 1995) I decided to talk to the head teacher whom I knew was already aware of some of the problems. Over the course of my contact with the girl I had several meetings with the Head, both to keep her informed, and as a means of checking my own alarm and protecting myself.

#### **(iv) Working with refugees**

Working with refugee children and their families can bring additional considerations. Confidentiality and consent, as I have already indicated, can have a wider political and safety significance. Talking about family and friends can evoke bad memories and feelings of loss and separation that are often difficult to express (Melzak, 1994). In the pilot study I left cassette players running on tables where several groups were drawing pictures of

favourite TV programmes. In one group the discussion turned to what their parents liked. The other members of the group asked Yussef (an unaccompanied Somali refugee) what his mother liked. He replied that his mother was in Somalia. They didn't acknowledge what he said and moved on to talking about what they liked. Yussef muttered fiercely, 'I don't care what you like' and took no further part in the discussion. In any long term work or work that involves in depth informal interviews there are difficult decisions about just how close, or how often or how in depth it is ethical to go. In selecting the children and the groups I needed to bear this in mind and discussed this with the Head and class teacher before approaching the child and the family. The beneficial effects for the child of participating in the research needed to be balanced with keeping a boundary between therapy and research (Mahon et al, 1996). Children who were too vulnerable were obviously not included.

Refugee families often have to adjust to a very different way of life, social status and economic circumstances (Richman, 1998). One family who had been extremely wealthy before they had had to flee were so conscious of their changed circumstances that they were reluctant to allow me to visit their home. Again this was often a matter of being aware of how I was perceived. Often this was clearly as part of an establishment which they did not trust (Rutter, 2001). On the other hand I was often welcomed in as an ambassador and asked to explain why this society worked as it did. Different concepts of school and education, childhood, responsibility, different views of counselling and support (Richman, 1998; Kahin, 1997) all formed part of their enquiry of me and me of them in a process of mutual exchange.

#### **(v) The main participants in the study**

I focus on two groups of children- a boys' group and a girls' group. These are both friendship groups. A particular focus of the early playground observations was to identify children who would form the focus groups. I needed the groups to be friends, to represent refugee, migrant and 'home' children and to be suitable for a sustained study of this nature. It could not include children only temporarily housed in the area and likely to be moved

on. They also needed to have some interest in television. I identified two central children who were both refugees and then, based on observations of who they played with a lot and chatted to I built the groups around them. I give a brief biography of these children below. Although I have named them their families were also part of the study. Many other children were also part of the study either as 'satellites' to the main groups, siblings, or children who I chatted with regularly during the field work. I also refer to children and their families who were part of the pilot study. All the children were in years 4, 5, and 6. Apart from the families of the main groups I also include members of the parents groups, playground assistants and one or two teachers.

### **The girls' group**

There were three year 4 and one year 5 girl in the group. It was a less clearly defined friendship group than the boys' group partly because at the time I was starting work on this part of the data gathering, the classes were divided and reformed and new friendships were forming. In addition some of the children entered into complicated rivalries between each other and would fall frequently in and out of being friends. From my experience as a teacher I would say that this is one of the aspects of being a girl at this age but it was definitely exacerbated by the class changes. Nyota, Morwen and Juba had been at the school since the infants. Rhaxma had been attending for a year.

**Rhaxma** was the oldest child in the family. She lived with her mother, stepfather and younger step siblings who were substantially younger than her. She was born in Somalia and had lived in Italy as a toddler. Her family were very religious and she attended Qur'anic classes twice a week and wore the hijab. She never played out with the other children and helped her mother a lot at home with the smaller children. She was often off school. She spoke Somali at home. At the start of the fieldwork she had just been moved into the class and was forming new friendships so she was a new member of the group. Her step father was attending college to learn English. Both adults were fairly well educated although I don't know to what level.

**Nyota** was the third child of the family. She had two older brothers and one older and one younger sister. They were refugees from The Democratic Republic of Congo and had been in this country several years. They got Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) to stay in this country during my fieldwork. Nyota's parents were middle class, highly educated people who were having to rebuild their lives in circumstances that they never dreamed they would find themselves in. They were very willing for Nyota to work with me since they knew and trusted me but arranging home visits was difficult since there were still many family tensions at the time my study started. Nyota had been three when they came here and her memories of The Democratic Republic of the Congo were from family reminiscence and discussions. English was her main language and she spoke very little French and almost no Lingala. She was often in conflicts and arguments and saw her role very much as the forceful, independent girl. She would often get into fights with the boys if they called any girl sexist or racist names.

**Morwen** was a central and popular figure in the class. She was part Welsh and part Grenadian. She had one older sister. Several of the children mentioned that she had been very helpful to them when they first came to the school. As a group member she was a little controlling insisting that they take turns when we discussed things. Sometimes I felt she actually inhibited the flow of the talk, but as a calming influence she was invaluable. The family had lived in the area for a long time and Morwen's grandmother lived very close to them. They gave permission very readily for her to take part in my study and were interested and happy to talk about their TV lives. Her father was a bus driver and her mother worked part-time.

**Juba** was the eldest in the group and moved into a separate class from the others during the field work. She had one older and one younger brother. Both her parents were from Ghana. They were aspiring business people who have lived in the area for some time but said they would like to move out into the country. Juba's elder brother Kofi was one of the boys on the edge of the boys group. She lived in the same flats as Morwen and they often played together out of school. Both Nyota and Rhaxma said that they had been scared of Juba when they first knew her but once they got to know her they liked her.

### **The boys' group**

There were 4 boys in this group. Three of the boys were in year 6 while Jima was in year 5 (again this was a split year class) but they were good friends both in and out of school and gelled well together while also representing a balance of different experiences.

**Samuel** was from Kenya. He had been in this country for 4 years. He was living with his parents and two younger siblings although it was clear he had a special bond with his father and that they had come here together before the rest of the family joined them. Samuel was really keen to take part in the study and was the only child who was able to participate in the editing of the video. He was highly motivated but often got into conflicts with his peers and they were very easily able to wind him up. He seemed to be on the edge of the group quite frequently, trying to find access. His father was a recent convert to the Jehovah's Witness Church and both parents feared the dangers that he might meet through his friends in the area. He was more controlled in his movements and in his television viewing. His father's immigration status meant he was not allowed to work in this country and his mother did some (unofficial) child minding.

**Estava and Denis** were twins. They were from Portugal. Their mother was a single parent who was very highly ambitious. She had recently set up her own business that appeared to be taking off. She had the boys when she was very young and separated from their father while still in Portugal. Their father had returned to Angola shortly afterwards. They had family spread around the world and talked a lot about plans to visit them. Their mother was planning to buy their council flat, but also to move out of the area as soon as she could buy somewhere else. Her grandmother lived with them and they had several family members in London. They returned often to Portugal and had no sense that their horizons were limited by circumstance. The boys were both very popular. They had been in this country for 3 years. They had a Play Station and children often either borrowed it (probably for a price) or went to their house to play. It was their house that we were allowed to go to after school to film the group watching TV.

**Jima** had arrived at the school in Year 1. He had come from Ethiopia with his father and was claiming asylum. They had been refused and were still waiting appeal. He had occasional phone contact with his father's family in Ethiopia but never mentioned his mother. He was always in trouble at school but was also well liked by staff and pupils. He moved with the older boys and never made one firm friendship, always moving between groups. He spent a lot of time out and about in the neighbourhood and his father had great difficulty in controlling him and knowing how to cope. His father was often ill and very depressed. He was unable to work in this country but had completed secondary school in Ethiopia.

**Other main participants were Leyla and Selve** and their mother. They had arrived from Turkey the previous year. The sisters were in years 6 and 4 respectively. They were Kurdish and spoke both Kurdish and Turkish. They had a younger brother. Their mother had never been to school. I never met their father. Leyla was very isolated at school, very young for her age, shy and nervous. Selve had been very friendly with Rhaxma before the class moves split them up. She was having problems making friends in her new class but was more included than her sister. Both girls mainly played with the other Kurdish/Turkish children. Their mother came to the school's parents group and welcomed me warmly into the home.

I also did an extended interview with **Safiyah** at her home and observed her daughter Fatima on many occasions as a fringe member of the girls' group. The family were from Palestine and had lived here since the 1970s. The father ran a kebab shop in the neighbourhood. Safiyah did not work and was very bored. She often helped on school outings.

## **(vi) Negotiating the role of researcher within the institution**

Negotiating the role of researcher was central to the ethnographic approach I adopted. Being identified as a teacher meant that I had to work hard to lose my authority status and build a new role as a researcher both inside and outside the school. At some level the

children, the parents, and myself were unable to see me other than as a teacher figure. I often felt large in the playground and was often expected by children, staff and parents to intervene in disputes. Several playground incidents noted in my field diary highlight these conflicts. In the following extract Floyd is the playground supervisor.

### **Extract from Field Diary**

Before Floyd arrives I am sitting at the edge of the football area and one of the balls goes over the locked gate. Two children start climbing over to get it - dangerous as it involves climbing the ten foot gate and then through some fencing at the top. I keep an eye and half-heartedly suggest they shouldn't but I am in a difficult position. I do not want to assert my adult authority and jeopardise my 'observer' role'. I do not know these particular children so have no relationship on which to base a different kind of approach. Am I responsible? I sit and watch as long as there is no immediate danger. Floyd appears and stands watching at the other end of the football pitch, teacher pose, arms folded, waiting for them to see him and stop. He says nothing but makes it clear that he thinks I should have stopped them. He then sits down with me in the sun and chats.

This incident occurred during the pilot study. I was trying to establish my new researcher role. I had met with the playground assistants, teachers and the caretaker to explain what I was doing and to establish the fact that I would be in the playground but no longer 'in charge'. Floyd had clearly thought what I was doing was a waste of time and as a result often undermined my new role both by drawing me into conversation about the children, thus effectively separating me from them (line 10). This incident, however, involved the children's personal safety and I was placed in a dilemma. I could act as 'grass' and go and get one of the assistants. I could 'become the adult' and make them come down (perhaps). I could egg them on as the other children were doing and pretend to be one of 'them'. I chose to do nothing and as a result found that myself being further undermined by Floyd. In the eyes of the children I then became an ineffective adult rather than the professional observer I was striving to be! Of course, much of my own discomfiture (against my better judgement) and Floyd's enjoyment, was based on the new hierarchy of institutional authority being demonstrated here.

## **(vii) Participant observation**

Participant observation is a central term in ethnography. It portrays not a distinct method but more an approach to the different aspects of data gathering. Participant observation does not mean striving to be separate and objective, but involves an engagement with what and who is being observed; it can involve discussion and activity; and interviews are open, the interviewer engaging in an exchange, not a one way question and answer session. Several researchers have discussed the balance between participation and observation. Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) refer to Gold's (1958) four distinct categories for participant observation although this approach loses the point that participant observation is a dynamic process. As Mayall (2000) argues, the researcher's role changes with every situation. For example Thorne (1993) describes her ongoing negotiations in the playground; Epstein (1998) recounts how a child asked her directly what her role was; and Hey (1997) talks about the 'messiness' of the research process. All demonstrate different emphases which derive from the social and physical contexts, one's own expectations and aims, and the view from the 'other side'. The role of the participant observer is dynamic, not fixed.

Participant observation and building a field diary formed the foundation of the fieldwork. Initially I spent many hours in the playground identifying the shifting patterns of play and friendship between the children. I became very aware of the ways in which both the physical environment and the routines of the school affected these patterns (Gordon et al, 1999). This took several forms. The playground itself was designed to form different play spaces and it was clear that these became girls' or boys' spaces and that different ages grouped in different places. There were contested areas and dangerous zones. The transition spaces like the stairs, hallways, halls and corridors, the tuck shop and, of course, the toilets were often rowdy. Physical and verbal insults were exchanged and tempers lost. Sometimes corners of these spaces were for secrets and tears.

All these affected where and how I observed and to what extent I could join in. But the greater impact was that made by the organisation of the school day. Playtimes were



precious, valued times, often withdrawn for bad behaviour. Different ages played at different times except for a cross over period during the dinner time, thus disrupting potential connections across age groups. This became particularly noticeable when classes were rearranged at the end of academic years. As a one and a half form entry school there were several classes that crossed years and so classes had to be rearranged with the resulting disruption of friendships. At the start of my fieldwork, classes had been rearranged in this manner. This impacted powerfully on several of the children I was working with and there were several weeks during which friendships I had observed the previous term were painfully renegotiated or lost.

It was in the playground before and after school and during play and dinner times that I focused on the children who formed the centre of the study but, as part of getting to know them, I also spent some time in the classrooms. I went with them on school outings, to the swimming pool and, outside school times, out and about in the local area. On these occasions I would go with between 2 and 4 members of a friendship group. They would take turns holding a small cassette recorder. The boys were particularly good at forgetting (most of the time) that it was on and this became a way of 'eavesdropping'. An advantage of this approach was that it gave the children a feeling both of control and participation. They decided when I was allowed to 'spy', changing the power balance and our relationship (cf Mahon et al, 1996).

I became increasingly aware that I needed to select more carefully which sections of the day I would observe and for how long, using my time more effectively and increasing my 'thinking' time (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Writing the field diary was only part of the process. I needed to do this on different levels so as to keep informing the ongoing fieldwork in a dynamic process of reflection. In order to keep the two key considerations of reflexivity and thick description to the fore I developed **four questions** that I referred to as I observed, talked, listened, wrote and began to analyse the data.

**'Who am I as I observe?'** demanded that I kept an awareness of the different views that others had of me and that I had of myself at all times. Children often asked me what I was

doing, wanting to see what I was writing or drawing, wanting to know more about me beyond this moment and this role. They often challenged me by, for example, swearing in front of me. Teachers often made me feel very uncomfortable. One in particular seemed to take pleasure in talking about the refugee children in deeply disparaging terms. Others bent over backwards to be helpful and inclusive. The same applied to playground staff as I have outlined above. Parents were amazed to see me out at weekends and half terms with the children, or were put out when I wasn't always at the school.

**‘Who am I observing and why?’** became my way of checking for considerations of ‘the other’. Firstly as an adult I was trying to enter the social world of the child. Davies (1982) argues that a central aspect of being a child is the ability to span both adult and child worlds. I was trying to gain insights into a world where my assumptions and viewpoints needed to be regularly questioned. My power as an adult was constantly undermined by being unsure of the accepted ‘behaviours’ of this world. On the other hand this insecurity made me more aware of the negotiations and learning required from the newly arrived children both to enter the new social worlds of their peers and of the new adults. I was very aware that my race, class and gender must affect what was said and how. Despite this, the fact that my own background is immigrant allowed conversations that appeared to relax the atmosphere and allow a sharing of different experiences. I don't pretend that this broke barriers but it definitely allowed me to embark on discussions from a different starting point.

**‘What is observation?’** became a way of thinking through what to include. The initial focus of my diaries was on the obvious play and conversation. As I relaxed to some degree into the process I became more aware of what was happening at the edges of the action and of the disruptions to the action. What was not happening was also often more worthy of observation than what I could see. This brought me to a closer awareness of the importance of gesture, body language, sound, movement across space, silence. What is interesting here is that this also made me aware of what I was already excluding and selecting even at the very earliest stages of research. The action of recording was also one of initial analysis.

**‘How does this inform other data and reading?’** meant that I needed to keep rereading my notes, transcribe interviews as I went along and keep reading other research. This heightened an awareness of what I was avoiding, where the interesting gaps were and the significant connections. This was not only a process of looking back over what I had done but also of informing what I was about to do. For example I had planned an interview with two Somali cousins. Over the preceding few days I observed them both in class and in the playground and became aware that there was a heightened degree of animosity and physical aggression between them. One of the boys had very recently arrived unaccompanied to this country and was finding it very difficult to settle. He had relied heavily on his cousin who was now resenting it and trying to break free. To interview them together at this point would have been damaging to the newly arrived child and in terms of the research would have been unproductive and so I changed my plans.

I became more and more aware of the fact that analysis is not a separate process from data gathering but one that gathers momentum and weight like a snowball as you progress. Lofland and Lofland (1984) suggest the following categories when analysing research notes:

- running descriptions of specific concrete events, descriptions of what is happening and who is there-
- recalls of forgotten material, when events jog your memory of other events
- interpretive ideas, analyses of the situation both that address the research question
- and those that will support and add more material
- personal impressions and feelings
- reminders to look for additional information

Sluckin (1981) talks about the need both for intuition and patience to be able to recognise important events in the playground and to allow them to fall into significant patterns.

Davies (1982) discusses the importance of the disruptive events in throwing the everyday patterns and the ‘taken for granted’ into perspective. I adopted a process of ‘vignetting’ at different times when I was rereading my field diaries. I would take a small section of the

field diary where something puzzled or surprised me or where I thought something should have happened but didn't and try to clear my mind to allow me to remember and write down other related incidents, points from reading other research or theoretical discussions, to note questions, sometimes to draw. Primarily this was a way of brainstorming in order to find patterns, connections and gaps and to allow intuition and surprises to operate and inform me.

### **(viii) Participant observation and media related activities**

Up to now I have discussed in general terms the approach I took to 'entering the children's world' but in fact the focus of this study is much more specific and I needed to come to grips with television and TV talk in relation to this world. Once it was clear who the key children would be and which of their friends would form the groups I wanted to work with I needed to find ways of spending more focused time with them. The idea was to lead the discussion towards group TV talk in a way that would not be possible in an interview situation where my presence would be too inhibiting or controlling. This had worked well in the pilot study allowing me different insights into the group dynamics and opportunities to pursue questions that had arisen during other observation times. These activities also developed work leading to the video productions.

During the sessions I left the tape recorder running. I don't believe they ever really lost an awareness of it. Frequently when I left the room they would apologise into the tape for swearing. For this reason I resisted video taping many of the sessions but as part of the video production itself I did video tape one session with each group. In fact I was surprised at how useful this was in noting the body movements and some of the undercurrents of the interactions that my notes left out. As I became more familiar with the children it was useful to employ a different way of observing to refresh my sight and disrupt my expectations.

One activity of these sessions was making posters about themselves and television. I brought in a pile of magazines related to television and they cut and pasted, sometimes

drawing or adding written comments. The boys did this in pairs thus forcing them to negotiate and discuss what and why they chose or rejected items. The girls group made individual large booklets. This was a much harder group to contain and I felt that the divisions and arguments in the group would disrupt any useful discussion if they were to share the posters. I was also aware that Rhaxma might find this activity difficult as it would involve some exposure of her home life and her differences from the others. The activity needed to encourage her to participate but also to feel safe. The girls' posters also included what their parents liked to watch on TV, thus allowing a discussions of their home lives that was rare and very exciting for Rhaxma since it became clear that there were a lot of similarities here.

The animations grew out of the drawing sessions. An animator came into the school and led the work but the children soon took control. The boys already knew how animations were made and once they had built their individual stories were able to operate the camera themselves and organize the voice-overs. The girls needed a little more guidance. They made one joint animation about the games they played in the playground and then each child made a short animation about herself. Rather than presenting only the still pictures they drew, the video allows the children to speak directly to them. The beauty of the animations was that the rough editing took place there and then and was done by the children. They were able to see an immediate product and to comment on it.

The 'final' videos are a combination of the animation sequences, research footage that I shot during the group work sessions, the children's own footage of each other, shots out and about in the neighbourhood, in school and in one of their homes. The boys' video includes music that they selected. The children viewed all the material and made selections as to what they would like included and why. The videos became a medium through which the children could represent themselves, their group and the contexts of the research.

One could argue that these sessions were false, in that I had set the children up to talk about television and that this did not reflect the ways in which such talk might arise in everyday 'real' situations. In response I would argue that these sessions built on what I had

observed in other contexts. They worked as a form of triangulation, confirming and raising questions in relation to other data. They offered insights that informed both the interviews and the home visits and interviews with parents. In content they were not largely different to what I had encountered in other contexts. The main difference was that these exchanges were more intense and took place over a longer period with fewer interruptions of other topics. They are artificial in the sense that such talk would not normally take place in the classroom contexts in which many of the activities took place, and that my presence and that of the tape and video recorders will have affected much of the talk. However, they gave a dynamic sense of the types of exchanges and negotiations that are a central part of TV talk. In this manner I was able to access many of the details of the talk that otherwise I would have been too distant from to note accurately.

#### **(ix) Interviews and interviewing**

The sessions described above often slid into group interviews. Topics would arise that I picked up and pursued with direct questions. Sometimes the session ended with a short interview. These were on the same tapes as the activity sessions and I transcribed them as one session in recognition that they grew out of the work and interactions that preceded it. They had more the feeling of a conversation, with the children interrupting and asking each other and myself questions as well. Silverman (2000) discusses the ways in which we now live in an 'interview society' in the sense that different forms of interviews form much media content and everyday social interaction that is part of making sense of our lives. This view of the integrated nature of interviews rings true for the way the group interviews evolved. However, this does not negate the need to keep an awareness of the interview context and its social dynamics.

Individual interviews and interviews with parents and staff were more formal occasions in the sense that they were usually pre-arranged, took place in as quiet a room as possible and there were clear areas that I thought I wanted to cover. I was often aware of the ways in which interviews became 'performances' on both sides. If I was interviewing a refugee or migrant family I would do as much research into that country as possible. I would decide

how to present myself; what to wear and what gift to bring (Fontana and Frey, 1994). I was conscious of my race, my gender and my class and would find myself either playing or down-playing these. However, I approached these interviews as far as was possible in the spirit of my overall approach, influenced by feminist critique of the interview as a masculine paradigm (Oakley, 1981). I viewed the person I was with not as a representative but as an individual, not as respondent but as participant (Spradley, 1979). I engaged with the topic myself where it was appropriate and not intimidating. The interviews were preceded by other contact such as one or more visits to the home, chatting in the playground or on an outing, participating in a group activity. The interviews were often wide ranging and mostly did not follow my initial brief. This, of course is an ideal picture and reality often disrupted it. The following examples illustrate some of the particular problems I encountered while also highlighting factors I needed to be aware of when transcribing and analysing the data. I focus here on interviews with parents.

In most cases it was the mother I interviewed but sometimes the whole family would gather or the parents would prefer to be interviewed when the children were not around. Sometimes I did not know what or who to expect. For example I arrived at Nyota's house to interview her mother who had failed to be in on two previous occasions only to find she was again not there. Her husband was there, however, and we spent a long time chatting partly in English partly in French. He was clearly keen to maintain an image that both asserted their educated and previously powerful background and presented himself one of a united family. He was clearly exhausted but determined. He did not want to be taped but was prepared to discuss the questions I raised, adding many of his own. I discovered much later that it was during this time that the family was on the point of separation brought on by the pressures they were under as refugees adjusting to new diminished and powerless circumstances (Richman, 1998). Later still, after they had received their Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) from the Home Office, visits became very different, and despite their overcrowded circumstances, much more positive.

My efforts to disrupt the hierarchies of the interview situation were sometimes themselves disrupted by interpreters which in turn affected subsequent contact with the families. I had

visited Leyla's mother a couple of times, the two of us struggling to communicate through sign language, a few words and some help from her children. When I came to do the interview with an interpreter she was very nervous. I had not briefed the interpreter sufficiently about the style of the interview I wanted to take place and the interview was conducted in formal interpreter's style resulting in Leyla's mother becoming more and more nervous but also angry. The following week the same interpreter came to assist at a group interview I set up with several Turkish Kurdish mothers. This time the problem was different. The interview style was more relaxed and after a slow start the discussion became quite lively and actually quite difficult to follow between all the people (adults and children) and the three languages operating (English, Turkish and Kurdish). However, it became clear during this session that despite my care in finding the right person for the job, style and approach were not the central problem. The interpreter was clearly anti-Kurdish. This explained what had taken place during the home interview. This was clearly not in the interests of either the participants or the research itself (Shackman, 1995; Richman, 1998). I gave the tapes to a different interpreter to transcribe and also to check to what extent my observations were confirmed in what was said. I also returned to the home as soon as I could afterwards and apologised through one of the other women.

I spent several hours in the home of one of the Somali families talking to the mother of the household. Our talk ranged over many issues. However, she would not agree to be interviewed or included in the study. She was keen to involve another woman who was one of the organisers of a Saturday Somali school and a community leader. She set up the interview and hovered in and out while it took place. I was left with the distinct impression that it had been set up in order to make sure that I had the 'right' information from the 'right' people. It was clear that certain community hierarchies were being enacted, by both women, through this series of events.

## **(x) Organising and processing the data**

Much of the discussion above has been about negotiation. This process of negotiation produced a series of texts: written field diaries and notes of conversations, transcripts of



interviews, transcripts of talk during activities and outings, drawings and videos. The production of these texts encouraged the production of more texts in the cyclical process of gathering and analysing that is fieldwork. How was I to organise and view these processes and texts?

Initially I organised the data into two broad categories:

- \* **‘General characteristics of TV talk’** was organised into three groups. Here I placed all the data that demonstrated key types of TV talk, that showed how TV talk is determined by social factors and thirdly, how TV talk operates in negotiating group membership, especially amongst friends

- \* **‘Social geographies’** began to look at the specific circumstances of refugee and migrant children and families. Here I started with broad categories such as TV and diaspora, TV and homogenisation, languages and TV, cultural difference and TV and developing a sense of place.

Within these two categories I then coded the data according to individuals, friendship groups, families and specific themes making room for crossovers and contradictions. In this way I began to look at the data in different ways. I needed to look at the same child in different contexts and at different children in similar contexts. The next stage was to look at the coded and categorised data in relation to the broader themes identified in Chapters 1–5. I needed to see the data both in relation to key themes such as inclusion / exclusion and negotiating difference and identity but also to relate these to the media. Thus important areas of media experience such as international news, key television texts such as The Simpsons and the role of satellite and diasporic media were highlighted. It also drew out issues about family and social life and its relations to TV life.

Organising the data also meant decisions about how it would be presented. The first point was that TV talk is a universal part of social interaction and the base on which much social contact is made in any group of children. I started then with the common factors in order to

be clear exactly what TV talk consists of in everyday interaction with children in general (Chapter 7). The second stage was to look at how TV talk operated in the lives of migrant and refugee children specifically across factors of cultural difference. This included looking at the role of global and diasporic media in the lives of these children (Chapter 8). I then focused on the two children who were central in the focus groups and studied their uses of television in relation to their specific experiences and situations (Chapter 9). Thus I have offered different viewpoints of the same data and of the same people both from long shot and closer focus. Finally the visual data draws these portraits together (Chapter 10) in a form of triangulation.

Coding and organising the data and seeing it in relation to related theoretical discussions was the first stage. I then needed to select appropriate data for a close study and to get a view on the details, the nuances and the contradictions.

### **(xi) Analysing the texts**

In observing, participating in, 'fixing' and analysing the interactions that took place I am drawing on work in social psychology, linguistics and post-structuralist theory. I view language not as a transparent view of the speaker's individual knowledge and beliefs, or as a straightforward representation of reality, but as a process in which the speaker is engaging with others to construct and give meaning to their reality. Language then performs social functions, is formed and reformed by social contexts and constraints. It asserts race, age, class, culture - difference and sameness. It forms and performs identity. In this sense, there is a dynamic between the ways in which language positions us and represents us in relation to social discourses, the ways in which we use language to represent us and, thirdly, the ways in which we use language to challenge and renegotiate these discourses. Our identities are 'not fixed but negotiated products of the ongoing flow of interaction' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995).

Language can act as a window into these dynamics. Looking at how social interactions are routinely enacted through language offers us a way of understanding the relationship

between language, identity and society in situ (Silverman, 2000). As I have outlined in Chapter 3 the basis of much television audience research in Cultural Studies is that television, and talk about television, in everyday life expose the dominant social discourses that are in operation and which position us. But they also expose how individuals and social groups position themselves in relation to these. What you say about television, how you say it and why you say it exposes who you are, individually and collectively. These considerations confirmed my desire to include a mixed group of children into the study, based on friendship groupings rather than other social categories. In this way I aimed to get a view of the everyday interactions among friends for whom such chat was an essential routine.

The question then was what principles I would use to guide my analysis of the data. My main criterion was to be able to look at these texts from different angles. I wanted to be able to focus on the 'micro', the representations and interactions of the individual or small group but to hold this within the context of the 'macro', the broader social networks and realities (Silverman, 1985). I have already implied that this process is not neutral. It is not possible to produce an objective reading. We are again in the loop of text, reflection and truth I discussed in relation to ethnography and visual ethnography. However, there are some useful approaches that keep this dynamic of the individual and the social at their centre while focusing more specifically on language use. One of these is a structure offered by Fairclough (1989). Fairclough suggests three lenses through which to analyse different kinds of texts. No one category is totally exclusive of the other. 'Contents' refers to the factual claims that the speaker makes about the world – how the speaker represents what has happened. 'Relations' focuses on the social relations entered into through the text between the speakers and, thirdly, 'subjects' holds onto the speakers subject positions and the ways in which these are evaluated and expressed through the text. His approach prioritises individual texts and language while I sought to view different types of data in close relation to each other thus building up the thick descriptions that are central to the ethnographically styled approach I had adopted. However, within my more comparative approach Fairclough's categories encouraged me to look more closely at the details within each text.

The basis of my inclusion of visual data was not to translate these into written texts but to be able to use them as visuals that added another dimension to the written texts. This would offer an analysis based on different views of the research from different media and not simply add to one view (Pink, 2001). However, the drawings, posters and video work needed a slightly different but related approach in analysing them and for this I drew on social semiotics. Again the drawing (the sign or symbol) is a process structured through the cultural, social and psychological history of the 'sign-maker' within the particular context in which it is made (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). Systems for analysing composition draw on notions whereby the positioning of different elements (left or right, top or bottom, centre or margins) carry different significance and that these 'signs' within the composition are part of the cultural literacies that we recognise when we 'read' it. There is a danger in a study of this nature in relying too much on an approach that, by its own admission, is very culturally specific. However there are certain elements here that I have found useful.

As I combined my study of the drawings and video sequences with analyses of the other data, certain sequences and events came back to me reinforcing or questioning the other data. The interplay between the different forms of data, analysis and theory continued in a new way. Thus I am reluctant to separate the visual data from the other materials but prefer to see it as one interrelated process. It is their combination and the interrelation with the other data using these interpretive categories that I wish to stress here. Below I have selected three different types of data that focus on the importance that television had in Rhaxma's life and set out some of the considerations I bore in mind when analysing them.

### **Extract from field diary– observation**

Rhaxma went off to change out of school clothes but she kept her hijab on. There was a tussle with her Mum telling her to take it off and her not wanting to 'cos her Mum had cut her hair short. She said it was a horrid colour because it had been dyed with henna. Finally she did take it off and I made a fuss about how lovely it looked. She relaxed. All the time the television was on and Rhaxma's little sister would often get up and dance to the music or sing along with the songs ie the coco pops advert.

Rhaxma knows all her favourite programmes. Her mother says she watches Italian TV. She had also wanted to have Arabic TV but the company didn't do that. She said there were too many channels on really. The only one suitable for the children was cartoon network and after 9pm it is not good. I forgot to ask her about watching the news. She is a large woman, a very round face and wonderful smile. We talked about the children. She said she was pregnant again - twins. She is clearly very worried about it. They are due in October and the baby is only 10 months old. The baby woke up and Rhaxma went to get him.

This observation gave me certain factual information about the family circumstances, the importance of television in both the children's lives and their mother's and about Rhaxma's helping role at home. This was not information I would have been able to gain in another way and it informed other data and provided me with contextual knowledge that was important. The issue about the hijab highlighted her relationship with me. Her dilemma about how much she should reveal about her private self and how much her mother would approve of is highlighted and again would not have been available in other data as clearly.

### Interview extract

- |    |         |  |
|----|---------|--|
| 1  | INT:    | Have you got a TV in your room?                            |
| 2  | RHAXMA: | No   |
| 3  | INT:    | Where...   |
| 4  | RHAXMA: | Used to have   |
| 5  | INT:    | OK used to have, when didn't you have anymore?             |
| 6  | RHAXMA: | When it broke down   |
| 7  | INT:    | OK so now where is the TV?                                 |
| 8  | RHAXMA: | In the living room, everyone shares it                     |
| 9  | INT:    | OK so what happens when your mum wants to watch            |
| 10 |         | something different?                                       |
| 11 | RHAXMA: | I go and write, I go and do my work                        |
| 12 | INT:    | OK and what does your Mum like to watch?                   |
| 13 | RHAXMA: | Or sometimes I watch it with her                           |
| 14 | INT:    | What does your mum like to watch                           |
| 15 | RHAXMA: | Films  |
| 16 | INT:    | OK in what language  |
| 17 | RHAXMA: | Sometimes English. She watch lots of English and sometimes |
| 18 |         | Italian channels. We watch everyday and she gets boring    |
| 19 | INT:    | It gets boring for you?                                    |
| 20 | RHAXMA: | No my mum gets bored. I quite like it                      |
| 21 | INT:    | You like it. Can you remember some Italian?                |

22 RHAXMA: Hm  
 23 INT: No, so why do you like it then?  
 24 RHAXMA: Yeah because sometimes they speak in English and there's a  
 25 programme I like and I just watch it even if I don't know the  
 26 language of it  
 27 INT: Why is that do you think?  
 28 RHAXMA: Don't know  
 29 INT: What's the programme about  
 30 RHAXMA: Its only about like, its about kids, its called Solento  
 31 INT: OK  
 32 RHAXMA: And it's like programmes, cartoons  
 33 INT: In Italian  
 34 RHAXMA: Yeah  
 35 INT: OK and do you watch that with your Mum  
 36 RHAXMA: Yeah

This is a difficult extract that on the face of it contains little of significance. The factual information is hard to get. Rhaxma was reluctant to say anything but in fact the information about what she watches complemented the picture I had from the observation about the importance and mix of television viewing in the household. Her initial monosyllabic answers are important in confirming the ways in which Rhaxma tried to protect her privacy and not allow me entrance. This was in line with the hijab incident in the observation. Yet I also needed to note how this changed. She became precise (naming the programme Solento) and excited about what television she watched with her mother. This offered me another insight into the important role television played in their relationship. It also confirmed some of the family dynamics I had observed. But in addition, her sudden eagerness to tell me about it noted a change in our relationship which was significant for the research. I was being let in and this changed how I should view subsequent data.

Drawing - Rhaxma's bedroom

**CHILD'S DRAWING REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES**

This could be read in different ways. Taking a social semiotic approach to the composition I needed to consider where the different components are placed on the paper and in relation to each other. By such a reading the fact that the television showing the Power Puff Girls is placed in the top half and to the right is significant and denotes that this is 'New' and 'Ideal' - contested and aspired to. Other placements denote other meanings that could be significant especially in relation to other data. In fact in this particular drawing a social semiotic reading appeared to be almost too pat. My approach was more cautious and I needed to be aware of what other knowledge I was bringing to the analysis. In the context of Rhaxma's reluctance to reveal her private life it was more significant that she was now prepared to do this drawing of herself at home, during a group session in the company of

myself and the other children. However, she still depicted herself wearing her hijab although in reality, of course, she didn't wear it at home. Or on a more basic level I knew that the television was indeed both high up (to keep it out of the reach of the smaller children) and on that side of the room, opposite the bed. The more significant detail was that she couldn't hear the TV anymore since the arrival of the twins. The picture that accompanied this was of her mother in the living room with the twins, separated from her. This contrasted with the image of togetherness in the interview extract and highlighted her changing relationship with her mother and her separation from the comfort of the television.

These three snippets of data each offered unique insights but each was difficult in its own way and could be read in slightly different ways. Taken together and read from different view points they complemented, informed and questioned each other and ultimately in relation to other research and theoretical discussions they painted a picture. The visual also gave this analysis an emotional depth and immediacy that would have been lacking with only words. I have stressed here how these extracts interlinked. This presented a dilemma. In the following chapters I present extracts and my analysis of them in an attempt to make the process as transparent as possible and so that the reader can contest or agree with my reading. However as this example illustrates the process of analysis and writing demands that no one piece of data is taken in isolation from the rest. The writing of this thesis is therefore indeed a patchwork and what I present are representations, layers of representations that I aim to be 'persuasive' (Atkinson, 1990).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined the general principles that guided my methodological approach, some procedures for gathering data and analysing it and some of the difficulties involved. I chose to follow an ethnographically styled approach that allowed me the flexibility to follow the children over a long period of time and to adapt and change my approach as the study progressed. It demanded that I develop a participatory methodology. This suited the work with children and demanded an awareness of the social



interrelationships between the participants, the wider social discourses at play and myself as researcher. I viewed the social interactions from many angles and through many representations always trying to keep hold of the political and social realities of the children's lives. One of the viewpoints I chose to follow was to include elements of visual ethnography and to analyse the data in relation to these in a form of triangulation.

But questions of method cannot be separated off from discussion and analysis of data. So in my account of the data, these methodological issues will recur. For example in Chapter 7 much of the analysis presented is based on knowledge gained from longer term observations and ongoing analysis of field diaries. This discussion of the issues involved in participant observation thread through the analysis. In Chapter 8 much of the data was gathered during home visits and interviews with parents. Here issues of language and interpretation and the styles and performance of interviewing are crucial to how the data is analysed. In Chapter 9 questions of access and consent and how this affects the data are highlighted. Finally in chapter 10 the role and status of visual data in relation to other data is considered.

## **PART 3**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Part three contains four chapters. These chapters contain the analysis of the data collected during fieldwork. They explore my research questions through empirical evidence and work towards grounding the theoretical discussions set out in Part 1 and relating previous research to these new contexts and concerns.

The key underlying assumption on which this analysis is based is that talk and knowledge about TV are not neutral. They carry specific representations of the world and put into play specific discourses about identity and belonging. These serve as symbolic resources for children in helping them make sense of the world and their place in it. Their TV talk explores their own realities, lifestyles, cultures, relationships and identities in relation to those depicted on their screens. However, within limits, their own social and psychological negotiations also redefine these representations and identities, bringing their own social and cultural contexts to bear. In this way TV talk becomes a shared space in which difference and similarity, both collective and individual, are explored and defined. It is these complexities that I wish to explore in detail in the following chapters through studying the ways that children (and, in particular, refugee and migrant children) use TV talk in their everyday lives.

The framework within which this analysis takes place is complex. As I studied the interview transcripts and read and reread my field diaries the overlapping influences of media globalisation, changing forms of migration, racism and reaction, economic, religious and ethnic forms of exclusion, changing conceptions of childhood and locality were all clearly evident in the data. However, this was not my main task. My eye needed to focus on the individual and the small group within this larger dynamic. I needed to get to know the children again through the data, from a distance. I needed to understand and draw out how the objective realities and everyday media choices played out in their lives. This involved piecing together from disparate images and small fragments their histories, family dynamics, economic realities, future hopes and dreams. I needed to keep a structural eye on the social and institutional conditions but at the same time I needed to read between the

lines, to try to get beneath the skin and take the risk of getting to know the human and personal as well. So I read the data with different eyes taking an eclectic approach as set out in the methodology chapter. I have attempted not to polarise the group against the individual, the social against the psychological, but this has often proved difficult. Crossing disciplines is still hard to do. The development of Cultural Studies, and of identity politics in particular, is a story of including different, often excluded, often exclusive, view points and questioning the assumptions that held them separate in the first place. This principle has been at the back of my mind throughout the process.

Taking an historical glance at the development of identity politics Zaretsky (1995) draws out the ways in which the movements of national and ethnic identity converged with those of the women's and gay movements to re-engage the private with the public spheres. Both Marxism and psychoanalysis were challenged in the search for a politics that recognised structure, motivation and agency. He claims:

One distinguishing mark of progressive identity politics today lies in the ability to be aware of one's own history, and to use that history self-critically. Invariably that history would lead the identity impulse simultaneously in two different directions. First, it would lead outward, to see the ties to other identities, other forms of difference, and to building larger and more comprehensive forms of solidarity but in forms that respect difference. This is the legacy of a Marxism that has not been abstractly negated but has been genuinely transcended, aufgehoben. But second such a history would also lead identity politics in another direction, inward, to the ultimately irreducible if indefinable sphere of the individual, from whose needs all forms of identity are constructed. This is the legacy of psychoanalysis, which, like Marxism, has not lost its relevance.

(ibid:258)

Likewise it is argued that cultural studies should be centrally concerned with "the historical forms of consciousness or subjectivity, or the subjective forms by which we live or the subjective side of social relations. It includes centrally the 'who I am' or 'who we are' of culture, the formation of individual and collective identities". (Johnson 1986:280-1). Thus while I have been at pains to emphasise the social base of TV talk and the ways it is structured within social institutions and relations I am conscious that this is only part of

the picture. Individual 'thema' and personal preoccupations need also to be brought to the fore.

In the first two chapters of Part 3 I focus on how TV talk operates in building social relationships and connections, concentrating on the public sphere. In Chapter 7 I look at how TV talk operates in social relations generically across the spectrum of children at the school. This analysis is closely linked to discussions set out in Chapter 3 (Childhood, Children and Media). In Chapter 8 I focus on TV talk in the lives of the refugee and migrant children and their families drawing on discussions of globalisation, diaspora and media uses in migration as set out in Chapters 1,2 and 4. In Chapter 9 I move into a closer analysis of two children, both refugees. I outline their personal circumstances and set out some of the ways in which their preoccupations with television and with particular programmes give possible insights into their social and psychological lives and the ways in which they negotiate their social inclusion and exclusion. Here I draw primarily on discussions in Chapter 2 and 3 but also on the points made above by Zaretsky (1995) and Johnson (1986) to focus on the individual and the personal. Finally, in chapter 10, I examine the ways in which the practical video productions offer another layer to the picture, both to confirm the analysis of other data and to raise new questions that other data did not reach.

In Chapter 6 I discussed the need for self reflexivity in research of this nature. This has been the basis on which I have approached the whole study. However, this becomes especially acute in Chapter 9 in which I take a more individual and psychological look at two individual children and their personal themes, histories and preoccupations. I need to bring my role and the processes of the developing relationships more to the surface. What I experienced with these children and what they revealed of themselves was in the context of the research and my role as researcher. Although this position allowed me important insights I am also well aware of its limitations. The interpretations that I make, however, offer an analysis that attempts to draw both the social (outer worlds) more closely to the personal (inner worlds) and by so doing give a more layered and in depth analysis. My aim

overall is to follow both directions set out by Zaretsky, thus offering a more complete picture of the social worlds of these children.

**Introduction**

In chapter 3 I focused on a Cultural Studies approach to audience research and the importance of children's talk about television in negotiating social relations and in identity formation. As I stated in that chapter much of this work has relied in the past on analysis of transcribed interviews and focus group discussion specifically on television (Buckingham 1993a, Palmer 1986). There has been little work that includes observation and analysis of wider ranging informal talk that is not specifically television focussed. Gillespie's work (1995) comes the closest to this with its focus on the small, often inconsequential talk that, when assembled with other data, begins to come to grips with the embedded nature of TV talk. But TV talk, among younger children, in particular, also takes very different forms that become apparent through longer term observation.

The main point is that TV talk takes different forms, both verbal and non verbal but it is all aimed at creating a shared children's space within which social relations are negotiated, identities formed, social behaviour is patrolled and social inclusions and exclusions defined. These emphases are also shared by the work discussed in Part 2 that studied the language of subcultures 'as a medium through which social acts are accomplished': language itself is seen here as a social act through which social identities are formed (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). Thus TV talk is not neutral. Using the metaphor of a working theatre there are several factors beyond the actors' performances themselves that limit and define the action; the theatre design, the script, the theatre and stage management and the cast. The production itself is reviewed by critics and audiences, and the next production of the same play will vary, sometimes under the influence of this production. The creativity is not that of the actors alone but is built from the interrelation of all these elements and is bounded by them. Exclusions occur at different levels. The actors are auditioned. Hierarchies of responsibility and credit are decided or fought over. Scenes are cut. Seats are sold.

Continuing this metaphor this chapter is organised as follows. In the first section I elaborate on three very different styles of TV talk. I set out the skills the actors need in order to participate in the production. The second section sets out the ways in which TV talk is embedded in the realities of everyday life. Here we are dealing with the everyday running of the theatre; the different levels of management, the finances, the place of the theatre in the local and wider communities. The third section studies the ways in which TV talk operates in the formation of the friendship group and in the group dynamics and power relations. The selection of the cast, what roles are allocated and how they are managed is central here. The last section acts as an overview of the main points raised in previous sections. Here I focus on specific texts that recur in the children's TV talk and look at how the talk both plays with the texts and is shaped by them. The texts set the framework within which the shared space is built, just as the script of the play sets the frame within which the actors rehearse, improvise, and develop their creative adaptations. The expectations of the theatre management and its reputation also influence this process. Within this dynamic children negotiate social relationships which are both inclusive and exclusive.

## **(i) TV Talk – what is it?**

The aim here is to explore the range of different forms of 'TV talk'. I have chosen to take a broad view that includes three categories: TV chat, non-verbal TV communication and TV 'knowledge' talk. Each category includes many different forms which themselves overlap and weave through each other but at the same time there are distinct forms that recur consistently and that invite analysis.

### **(a) TV chat**

TV chat is essentially informal. It ranges from long elaborate retellings of story and plot to one word referencing. It includes word play, accents, singing and dancing. The chat describes the action and the characters. But more importantly it aims to recreate the atmosphere and the emotions of the programmes and the sensations of watching. Beyond that the children also aim for effect and response from the group. Chat is not about

recalling the story but about creating the sense of group sharing that accurate and dramatic recall provokes. It is the core of what TV talk is all about. Thus, as I have argued in Parts 1 and 2, studying even these apparently frivolous interactions allows us important insights into children's social worlds. Several studies have focussed on the detailed nature of such talk and on its often ritualistic nature (Buckingham, 1993b; Hodge and Tripp, 1986).

I will focus here on several distinct components to chat about TV: negotiations for group membership and affirmations of group membership, characterised by what I label auctioneering; long stories, often reduced to a single word, phrase or movement, often based on word play or accent; and singing and dancing involving both words and movement. All these form the core of TV chat.

Chat has several different types of starting points. Children will mention a programme, incident from TV, or a personality and call it out for approval to see if it is taken up by the others. This is what I call auctioneering. It was noticeable how often new children or those who are on the edges of the friendship groups would do this. They would present a selection for the group and then have to either suffer the rejection or be accepted into the subsequent chat and group acceptance that this offering might facilitate. It is a tense process and one I witnessed time and again. Set phrases are often used: 'Did you see the one where?' 'Do you like ...?'<sup>1</sup> In this extract three girls, while talking about an episode of Art Attack, are vying for centre stage. They are also checking out what characters are acceptable within their group, and confirming shared values and tastes.

### Extract 1

- 1 RHAXMA: Do you like Smart? I don't  
2 MORWEN: It's boring  
3 RHAXMA: I watch it every Friday and Wednesday  
4 [They go on to talk about Pokemon. Or Rhaxma talks and Morwen  
5 hardly replies.]  
6 JUBA: Do you like Clefairy?

---

<sup>1</sup> Programmes themselves will play with and suggest this process. Episodes of Friends, for example, are often entitled 'The one where...' or 'The one in which...'.



7 RHAXMA: That's the star one?  
 8 MORWEN: That's the sweetest  
 9  
 10 [Morwen says she doesn't watch Pokemon so Juba and Rhaxma get  
 11 going on this topic. They call out different characters and either go  
 12 Urgh or 'yes!'  
 13 Rhaxma often starts with "Who likes....?]  
 14  
 15 RHAXMA: I even know all the characters and there are 150

Rhaxma offers up a different programme from the one being talked about (line 1). She confirms her knowledge (line 3). When the conversation moves on to Pokemon, Morwen is confident enough, as the group leader, to opt out without fearing rejection. Rhaxma however needs to continue. It is doubtful that Rhaxma in fact knows all the characters but having managed to participate through successful auctioneering she feels confident enough to make the claim. Rhaxma has at last found a way of gaining centre stage and feeling part of the group. All this requires a knowledge that is ready to hand at any time.

But there are also the openers where an external prompt will provoke a memory that starts the ball rolling. Leyla makes a link between a tuna sandwich and an incident in Keenan and Kel. When I get annoyed with the boys' group they all start to hold their breath because this sparks a group memory of a breath holding competition they have seen on TV. On several outings with the boys' group I got the impression that this was not quite as random as it seemed. I felt that rather than the prompt happening along, the children were actively looking for them. There were some well-known local characters and places in the area where they lived that were referred to as part of their common knowledge. Beyond this, when on unfamiliar territory, they would seek out and try to anticipate the prompts that cemented them as a group together. On one outing, walking along the South Bank towards The Museum of the Moving Image Jima lit on a busker playing the clarinet. He had been trying to re-enter the group after a rejected film choice. Now he seized the opportunity to turn the talk back onto a secure knowledge base. He began to retell an incident in The Simpsons that featured a saxophone player. It took him several attempts but with the help of the concrete reference (despite this being the wrong instrument) he succeeded.

Once the story has been established within the group as one of *their* stories then one word, movement or phrase was enough to provoke a response. So the longer story got honed down to the punch line or the word play. Knowing the key word established group membership. Playing with words was a well-loved form of chat. The programmes themselves often relied heavily on this form of word play and was an important humorous device which the children extended in their talk, humour remaining a key element.

On some occasions misunderstandings were incorporated into the talk and became established, unwittingly adding a new layer of humour and subversion:

### Extract 2

1 JIMA: Hank gets cussed by this man. He goes to him, "It's been  
2 so long since your mother's had a bath that she smells of  
3 cocaine gas".

Here Jima has mistaken the word 'propane' for 'cocaine' in an episode of King of the Hill - probably partly because he does not know the word propane. But it fits into his understanding of the form and, in fact, the context of his life in Kings Cross where drug dealing and use is clearly visible on an every day basis and the children have a lot of knowledge of drugs. He sees 'cocaine' as subversive and therefore worth a joke with his friends. It fits into the sense of the joke and so he gets away with it. The others respond appropriately and it is never clear if they have got both the intended joke and the unintentional joke or only the former.

In many cases it would be one word that sparked a TV reference that appeared to be very tenuously related. It was as if there was always a strand of TV consciousness running underneath every other interaction. During a group session with the boys they were discussing what happens if you forget your shorts for gymnastics. Jima had tactically forgotten his that day, as he didn't want to do it. As soon as shorts were mentioned both he and Samuel started singing a song from The Simpsons: "I want to wear short shorts" and

neither of them joined in with the main discussion at all. TV referencing became a barrier, a way of distancing or separating yourself and a way of justifying yourself.

Both girls and boys were adept at using different accents in their TV talk. Most frequently these were American as many of the programmes were, but they also used different British regional accents and sometimes a Jamaican accent would appear. Often rather than using the accent they would make fun of it or use it in subverting the language meaning. Here the girls' group talk about Rug Rats while making their posters.

### Extract 3

- 1 JUBA: You see how they say 'opposites', 'oppofit'?  
2 NYOTA: Ossopit'!  
3 JUBA: Yeah 'ossipit', let's do 'ossipit'.  
4 NYOTA: And how they say 'toilet'. They don't say 'toilet' or .. or something  
5 like that. They say 'party'.  
6 JUBA: Yeah.  
7 [all giggle]  
8 INT: Potty.  
9 NYOTA: No, 'party'!  
10 INT: Oh, they say 'party' 'cos they have an American accent.  
11

Here it is partly an enjoyment of playing with baby language but it is also clear to them from the visuals that potty is what was being referred to. They are simply enjoying the incongruity or humour of associating potty with party.

These words and phrases became so much part of the everyday exchange that the children felt they owned them. These jokes would now rapidly enter the every day referencing of the groups and the original words became entirely irrelevant. Interestingly, while it was clear that a lot of vocabulary was TV inspired there was also some criticism of this process as somehow lacking authenticity (Widdicombe and Wooffit, 1995). Originality was given high status. New words were sought out and contested. The dilemma was that in order to belong in the group children needed to use well known TV references to create the shared space but too much of this was considered as unoriginal and slavish. This process of conforming to TV talk expectations and challenging them is similar to the struggle of

the punks interviewed by Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995), who moved between 'displaying resistance' and stressing the ordinariness of their lives. This was a tightrope walk that newcomers often failed to achieve. Samuel and Jima discussed this dilemma, during a storyboarding session in preparation for the video.

#### Extract 4

- 1 SAMUEL: [drawing himself in the bath] Kojo would say 'butt-naked'.
- 2 JIMA: He gets all his words from TV.
- 3 SAMUEL: Yeah, Keenan and Kel.
- 4 JIMA: I hate people like that! Kojo gets all his cusses and that
- 5 from TV.
- 6 SAMUEL: You do too!
- 7 JIMA: No. Most of them I make up. Some I get from my friends.
- 8 SAMUEL: SO! They get them from TV!

Here we meet Samuel and Jima sparring. Samuel thinks that he has tapped into the right TV chat by referring to another TV expert, Kojo, and his use of words (line 1). Jima tries to take a superior position (line 2). Samuel is still on his own track and is pleased that he can reference where Kojo gets his words. Again Jima puts this down and tries to claim originality (line 7) but in the end has to acknowledge the fact that TV, even by a circuitous route, is the source of his vocabulary.

As we can see from the above examples much of this word play revolved around accents or the use of words more familiar in American English. But what also interested me were the occasions when they did not use an accent. Accents were used for effect - to underline a point - but were not central to the exchange. Where there were more important things at stake they were forgotten. On the boys' group outing to The Museum of the Moving Image one of the actresses involved them in acting out a scene from a western. They knew the genre well, played the parts, getting the movements absolutely precise but totally forgot the accents. The movement and form (the visuals) were more important in gelling the group rather than the accurate recall of the linguistic aspects of the form.

However, on other occasions the precision of verbal recall was essential. Not only did the children know details of story, character and relationship but also the dialogue. This would

be repeated and shared at length and thoroughly enjoyed but again very rarely in accent, as if by not using the accent the children had taken it more as their own. When they were seeking to distance themselves then accent was more appropriate as we shall see in the case of Jima. In this extract Morwen is talking about how Rug Rats relates to her life. She does not use accent but she does remember the dialogue in detail as well as the story lines.

### Extract 5

1 INT: ... and does any of the stuff remind you of things that  
2 happen at home?  
3 MORWEN: Apart from me pretending the adventures, no not really.  
4 INT: So you sometimes do the same adventures as that?  
5 MORWEN: Yeah, and there was one where Chuckie he got all dirty clothes and  
6 then his grandpa washed them and they shrank and he wanted to be the  
7 same size as the bag of newspapers so that he could get the golden  
8 medal. And afterwards the grandpa put them back on again and it  
9 looked like a belly top and pants and, um, [thinking] Tommy said,  
10 "I'm sure your clothes fitted you last time. You must be a giant baby  
11 now". Angelika stuck a picture of her on her dolly Cynthia's head and  
12 she said, "Oh Chuckie". And he came and he said, "Is that you  
13 Angelika?" And he stood on the dolly and she whispered behind the  
14 chair, "Oh no, you stepped on me I'm gonna die" and he said "oh no"  
15 and he went and told Phil, Lill and Tommy. And, um, they said "No  
16 you can't have" and she was cutting out all pictures of the family and  
17 sticking them on all the teddy bears and dollies and Barbies and things  
18 and she put them next to Chuckie and he thought that all the grownups  
19 and Angelika had shrunk.

The way in which Morwen recalls this incident is alive and dramatic. She recalls the dialogue in detail but because she is prioritising the emotions and the drama, which is reminiscent of conflicts she has with her older sister, here she adapts the accent to belong more to her world. Accents are used more for humour and distance than for feeling and togetherness.

Finally TV chat includes the singing and dancing that form a large part of TV talk. At every playtime children could be seen singing in groups. The new children learning from the well established children, the younger learning from the older and the boys learning from the girls. During one middle school Christmas party all the Year 3 and 4 children sat

in a massive circle in the hall playing pass the parcel. As the music played all the children joined in the singing of popular songs including many children who had not been in this country very long. They all knew the words the tunes and the movements. The participation and sense of togetherness created a very special atmosphere. I had not considered the power of MTV when I started this research but both this incident and Morwen's insistence on the important role it played in her family made me realise the importance of music in the role the media play in creating this shared space.

Mention of different programmes inevitably prompted the singing of the theme songs by both boys and girls. Some theme songs were highly symbolic. As with the Friends theme tune at the height of its popularity the words hold a meaning (de Block, 1997). For the girls' group when I first started working with them the theme song of the Power Puff Girls was their tune. Its words held a special meaning for them.

The Powerpuff Girls  
fighting crime trying to save the world  
they are there just in time  
the Powerpuff Girls  
POWERPUFF!

This sense of power really excited them. They would play this out in the playground and it appeared to me to be a follow on from the girl power and Spice Girls era that they had all been touched by. As time went on only Rhaxma held onto the song and the programme. In her life the significance was particularly poignant (see Chapter 9), offering her the opportunity, at least, to play at having power. The others moved with the top ten although they would return to the theme of girl power in various ways in their discussions and, through that, return to the theme song and the programme. It became a joke that Rhaxma still held to it so firmly.

Knowing the words of the songs was very important. Those who knew them well gained extra status in the group. One boy in Year 6 who had been a real outsider for much of his school life and been the butt of fairly recent bullying suddenly flowered in the last term by becoming a music and dance specialist. At the Year 6 leaving party he was the centre of

attention with a large circle of children watching and copying his dance moves. He knew all the latest music with words and steps and gained enormous status from this.

Both the girls' and the boys' groups used songs and music to create a sense of togetherness. When there was friction in the group it was often a song that one would start and the others joined into that smoothed the waters. Singing would move in and out of the group work as they concentrated on other things and sometimes moved into body movements to accompany the songs. It calmed the group and made a very cohesive atmosphere while it lasted.

When I asked how they knew the songs there was general puzzlement. It was Rhaxma, who had the least possibility of knowing about them and of having that knowledge accepted at home, who said: "Everyone knows about them". When pressed it was clear that MTV played a major role in many of their lives. For others it was the magazine programmes such as Live and Kicking that were important here. Children like Rhaxma and Samuel who had limited access to these programmes and no access to MTV seemed to make a particular effort to gain the knowledge in any way they could. They also seemed to think that this was knowledge that they had to have. Sometimes they suffered put downs for their ignorance and when they knew something they would advertise it loudly amongst their peers.

TV chat takes several forms but is essentially informal. It utilises the shared space that TV allows to create ritualised word, music and action play. It relies on the detailed knowledge of story lines and forms to create an often unspoken knowledge base from which minimised key words and phrases evolve. This process is vital in the creation of the shared space within which social relations are negotiated; but it also creates a new shared space which, as we shall see, acts both to include and exclude.

#### **(b) Non-verbal TV talk**

The term TV talk implies verbal communication. However, much television communication among children is strictly non-verbal. It involves whole games, small

gestures and body movements, facial expressions, use of accessories, different types of touching. It acts to confirm or demonstrate a knowledge of programmes and particularly of the small intimate details that are key to much TV talk. My own daughter pays great attention to the movements she does to accompany the endless acting out of scenes in Byker Grove and other favourites. She does this with friends, using either the mirror or a video camera, using exaggerated gestures, trying out the different identities. Some of the parents said their daughters also did this. This is essentially a private activity, not for adult eyes. Bloustein (1998) discusses a similar process in which a group of teenage girls use the video camera to play with their identities.

Throughout this section I will be referring to the enormous enjoyment that characterised most of the interaction during which the children shared their viewing. It was highly socialised and central to much of their group interaction. Once I had fully acknowledged the importance of the visual in the pleasures of watching TV it became obvious that the greater pleasures of sharing this medium must therefore involve a visual form of interaction. 'Acting out' could not be excluded from the arena of TV talk.

There were many examples of children acting out television shows both in the playground and on the outings. Within the formal structure of the school, verbal references were more common. It was interesting that on the couple of occasions I observed formal drama lessons the children did not choose television themes. Their acting styles at these times was very different and less fluid. TV acting out was part of their private enjoyment and did not form part of formal school life.

Often accessory objects assisted the play. Coats became Batman cloaks, the video camera prompted wrestling play, the back of a wooden horse became the operating theatre. A ladder drawn on the playground surface became the yellow brick road in The Wizard of Oz. As with other playground games, objects in the playground were often essential items necessitating that the game also had a geographical location. But a television link was the centre to many justifications for actions. I discuss the ways in which the children used the playground geography in more detail in the next section.



One little boy in the infants spent many playtimes roaring around the playground initiating fights with other children. Between encounters he would observe the others intently and then plan his totally non verbal attack and launch himself at the other children with fierce face, strutting movements and kung fu kicking. When I spoke to him he explained that he was Godzilla in order to justify his behaviour. Later he admitted that he hadn't in fact seen the film Godzilla at all although he had seen the adverts. He was doing two things here. Firstly he was using his actions to allow some social contact with his peers and secondly he called on an outside reference point to explain and somehow legitimise his actions. He knew that fighting was not allowed in the playground. By acting out Godzilla (or what he thought Godzilla does) he could somehow bend the rule and his actions would be allowed, as indeed they were. In addition he was claiming status by acting out a currently fashionable figure.

Acting out was also used as a form of subversion. Just as the little boy above used television to bend the rules against fighting in the playground so did the older boys. Favourite programmes were often chosen expressly because they are essentially irreverent, and therefore subversive, in formal institutional settings. The two main taboos that the children talked about when discussing television were 'rudeness', which covered both swearing and sex, and violence and fighting. These were the two that were most often played within the group through non verbal TV talk.

On the 'away weekend' with the upper school the whole group watched The Simpsons in their separate shared rooms. When, half way through the programme, they were called to dinner they all emerged from the chalet rooms buzzing with Simpsons talk. In one of the scenes Homer had shown his bottom. Many of the children were acting this out. Veton, a Kosovan boy, who had fairly recently arrived in this country and was still finding his place in the class, was most exaggerated and persistent in his gestures, trying to gain the attention of the group. He succeeded and they all went off to dinner together. So the acting out of a questionable scene allowed Veton to be accepted into the group, without the need for language fluency.

While other forms of physical contact or affection were ridiculed and very strictly patrolled for any hint of homosexuality, highly physical wrestling contact formed a basis of many exchanges amongst the boys and was totally accepted. It was necessary to have the background knowledge of how stunts were performed, the players' strengths and weaknesses and the various channels and programmes, live and repeats. The younger girls who were interested in wrestling kept their interest more private, generally watching with and play fighting with their fathers. They did not practise the moves amongst their friends, only with their fathers. It struck me that with both the boys and the girls wrestling was an opportunity to express physical affection in arenas which were heavily patrolled by social taboos. In section (iv) of this chapter I explore the children's use of wrestling in more detail.

Just as I have argued is the case with talk, acting out confirms membership of the group. Samuel was often on the edge of the group and often not as knowledgeable on TV matters due to the restrictions placed on him by his family. However, after a holiday in which he had been staying with relatives or when he had managed to watch something usually banned at home he was noticeably more active in the group, acting out scenes and demanding centre stage. It was as if he had to prove his knowledge not just by talking about plot or story line which he may have gleaned from others, but to actively demonstrate his absolute knowledge. This allowed him to renew his membership of the group and gain greater acceptance. Other boys would be constantly reconfirming their TV expert status by making almost continuous TV references and acting out elaborate scenes. They seemed to get added pleasure on occasion by acting out something that the others had not seen because they were not allowed to watch it (South Park for example or some late night film). This seemed to go counter to the way in which TV is used to create a shared space, and in these cases was purely used to gain added status within the group.

While TV programmes form much of the content of the play they also act as a support for already existing themes and styles of play. Thus the same programme was used in different ways depending on age, gender and the current fads of the playground etc. Rug Rats, for

example, would feature fairly straight forwardly in family role play games among some of the younger girls. It would recur among older children who would play it more ironically or use it to disrupt the games of the younger children. Games shows and chat shows also recur in different forms. This also allowed the possibility of incorporating new games and drawing on games from other cultures.

The importance of non-verbal play based on TV raises the interesting question of culturally determined body language. Many of the children and adults talked about acquiring language from television. It seemed to me that much of this learning was also to do with the non-verbal communications that took place while speaking. The long practising and rehearsals and repeats that went into many of the children's exchanges around non verbal TV talk were important in learning this language. It was also an area of potential ridicule, not simply when children didn't act as well as the others, but also because the main point of the acting out was to get the details of body movement exact. One of the more important elements of this was being able to act out the different body styles that the different TV genres demand. They needed to get it right and getting it right demanded social investment.

### **(c) Getting it Right**

TV talk involves different types of communication as we have seen above but it also demands different types of TV knowledge (Buckingham, 1993). These were used in different ways by different groups, ages and genders but were embedded in all TV talk. TV knowledge can take many different forms including; corporate, backstage, programming and other media which are the ones I concentrate on here. This was not talk that was narrowly focused on a particular plot or story line but had different knowledge bases that were drawn on according to social circumstances.

In this extract Samuel and Jima were out of school with me during a half term holiday travelling on a bus through their local area of North London. They were both members of the same friendship group but were not close friends. There was always a certain amount

of sparring that went on between them. The bus passed a large construction site that prompted the following display of knowledge and competition.

#### Extract 6

- 1 SAMUEL: I've been at my cousin's house  
2 JIMA: I've been playing. Oh yeah, this is going to be the new ITN  
3 studio, the new ITN studio  
4 SAMUEL: Look at the animation thing, the Warner Brothers [Samuel  
5 is  
6 looking at the hoardings hiding the building work].  
7 JIMA: Keep looking! This is going to be the new ITN studios.  
8 SAMUEL: There's the...  
9 JIMA: That's just the pictures  
10 SAMUEL: Yeah I know  
11 JIMA: It's going to the new ITN studios. You know when you  
12 watch WCW and stuff  
13 SAMUEL: Yeah  
14 JIMA: You know, after thing, after cartoon network finishes  
15 SAMUEL: WWC  
16 JIMA: WCW, ITN right, the channel ITN? This is gonna be where  
17 it is  
18 SAMUEL: ITN doesn't come on after WCW  
19 JIMA: Of course it does  
20 SAMUEL: ...doesn't, TNT ....  
21 JIMA: Yeah TNT, I mean TNT sorry, yeah TNT studios coming  
22 here  
23 SAMUEL: I was going to say! ITN! ITN's on channel 33, I mean 32  
24 JIMA: ITN is BBC3, ITV  
25 SAMUEL: BBC1, BBC2. No that's BBC2  
26 [the conductor is coming round]  
27 JIMA: 33 is...  
28 SAMUEL: ... is for LWT  
29 NJIMA: Yeah and Carlton  
30 SAMUEL: and Carlton

A range of corporate and programming knowledge is demonstrated here, and is used in the power battle between the boys. Jima was the acknowledged expert on all things television. He also spent a lot of time out and about on the street in his local area. Here the bus passing the construction site is a heaven sent opportunity for him to display his knowledge in both areas. Samuel on the other hand was very restricted both in his media exposure and his freedom of movement. He tries to open the media conversation by saying that he has

been staying with his cousin (line 1) where Jima knows he is allowed to watch a lot more television. This implies he has had an opportunity to update his knowledge and this presents a challenge to Jima. The space is immediately claimed by Jima (lines 2 and 3). Samuel tries to claim it back by referring to the animations depicted on the protective fencing around the site (line 4), which would allow him back onto better known territory. He claims knowledge by invoking 'Warner Brothers'. Jima ignores this for the more immediate and important corporate issue of which studio this is in front of them (lines 6 and 10) as opposed to which cartoon characters are depicted on the hoarding. He presses home his advantage by referring to wrestling (line 11) and then his knowledge of running order (line 13). All this is designed to put Samuel on shaky ground. In fact he himself is on thin ice as he does not have these channels at home. Samuel spots his mistake and gains the upper hand for a moment (lines 17 and 19). Jima has to quickly acknowledge his error and interrupts Samuel before he can press home his advantage and, by shifting the ground slightly, saves face (lines 20 and 23 ). The two are totally unaware of the conductor's interruption (line 25) so engrossed are they in the knowledge game.

The discussions about channels, programming and corporate ownership has become more complex with increasing satellite and cable possibilities. It was an important area of knowledge and status for these children to know what shows are shown when on what channel, even when it is the same show repeated. This need to make and demonstrate a knowledge of the links also applies to other media such as games and (increasingly) websites. In a sense having and knowing about a wide range of media was symbolic of being part of the society. It meant that you were in touch with the world and could participate in talk about it.

The younger girls were more concerned with knowing times and channels of programmes, rather than the more corporate and production aspects. Media knowledge was more to do with the sense of ownership of certain shows and channels. This desire to feel part of the channel was also a function of channel branding. Nickelodeon, for example, has paid a lot of attention to promoting themselves as an exclusive 'kid-only zone' (Kelley et al 1999). This branding is especially necessary where programming is very similar and the same

show can be viewed on several channels. This sense of ownership contributed to the overwhelming sense of excitement that pervaded and sometimes threatened to overtake the sessions I took in school time with children, especially the girls, in which I encouraged them to talk about television.

In the extract below Juba is talking about her favourite programmes. It is interesting that when I ask her what her favourite programmes are she replies with the channel that contains them (line 4). The younger children often did not understand the differences between programme and channel. For them it was what contained 'their' things that was important, the feeling of belonging, of ownership. Again and again channels like Nickelodeon and Disney were talked of in very personal terms, quite emotionally. Juba exhibits an increasing level of excitement as the interview proceeds. The excitement I felt was partly due to the fact that talking about television was considered subversive in school time but above this it was to do with the differences between private and public space. Television watching was considered to be a private, although social activity. Talking about television was a private activity undertaken between friends in informal spaces. It was where a lot of private business was negotiated between friends and it was where fantasies were acted out. For the older children this appeared to be more in the public domain and so the kind of demonstrating of generalised media knowledge, as opposed to very specific role playing among friends, was more frequent although this still remained in informal spaces. Talking to an adult, therefore, was changing mode. Here, Juba's replies are stilted and don't develop as they would with friends.

#### Extract 7

- 1 INT: OK, and have you got satellite or cable?  
2 JUBA: Yeah.  
3 INT: So what do you like watching best on TV?  
4 JUBA: Nickelodeon.  
5 INT: Nickelodeon. OK and what are your best programmes on  
6 Nickelodeon?  
7 JUBA: ... um Keenan and Kel, Sabrina, Moesha, um what else,  
8 Alex Mac and er RugRats and Doug, that's it!  
9 [she has gone all excited and breathless now talking about  
10 TV]

11 INT: and out of all those which is your bestest?  
 12 JUBA: Sabrina.  
 13 INT: Sabrina ok and would you like to be like Sabrina?  
 14 JUBA: No.  
 15 INT: [laughs]  
 16 JUBA: Sabrina the teenage witch, she is really a witch.  
 17 INT: And you don't want to be a witch.  
 18 JUBA: No.  
 19 INT: Wouldn't it be nice to be a witch sometimes? You can get  
 20 things done your way?  
 21 JUBA: No I don't like being a witch.  
 22 INT: No?  
 23 JUBA: No.  
 24 INT: Ok and do you watch CBBC or CITV or just Nickelodeon?  
 25 JUBA: Just Nickelodeon and Disney  
 26 INT: ... and Disney channel, films on Disney channel?  
 27 JUBA: Yes, and cartoons and my favourite on Disney channel my  
 28 bestest favourite one is um ah 25. What do you call it - is  
 29 the Balloon Farm  
 30 INT: Oh I don't know that one.  
 31 JUBA: I do.

Normally a topic such as Sabrina would have elicited lots of retelling of story lines and discussion of details. It would have branched off into the favourite TV knowledge area of stars and gossip. But here nearly all her answers are monosyllabic despite the fact that she is clearly excited (lines 7-10). As a result, my questioning becomes more stilted and we get nowhere. The point is that the TV knowledge exhibited in both groups, although at different levels and of different types, contributed to the successful social performing of TV talk within the group. There was little social purpose for Juba in entering this world with me.

However getting it right also involved knowing what TV knowledge to use on what occasion and with which people. As well as using television to initiate conversation with their peers the children used it to make contact with adults. In the interviews I conducted with the playground assistants it was clear that the children tailored their TV talk to the audience, mentioning some programmes to some and others to others. This was a skilled social calculation aimed at achieving the best in contact.

## Extract 8

1 INT: So the kids talk to you about popular TV?  
2 CATHY: Not all the time  
3 INT: Is it certain kids?  
4 CATHY: Yeah, it's at dinner times but its only certain children, not all  
5 of them. I mean a lot of the girls will say, "Can we show you a dance?"  
6 and then you will say, "Where did you get that from? Did you make it  
7 up yourselves?" and they will say, "No, we watched it on Top of the  
8 Pops with S Club7" or something. The girls tend to talk about music  
9 and singers and they will talk about them constantly if you start a  
10 conversation about it.  
11 SALLY: Yeah 'cos if I see like Emery and that lot...  
12 CATHY: Emery and that lot will talk about South Park and The Simpsons  
13 SALLY: ... and the dancing and obviously they get it from telly 'cos they know  
14 it step by step.  
15 CATHY: 'Cos they know I watch South Park and stuff like that they will, if they  
16 have nothing else to say they will turn around and say, "Did you  
17 watch..."  
18 INT: So it's like a conversation opener  
19 CATHY: Yeah and Dave always comes up to me on Friday when its on. And on  
20 a Monday morning I can guarantee the first time I see Dave, the first  
21 thing he says is, "Did you see South Park?"  
22 SALLY: They don't ask me about it. They think I'm too old to watch it. They  
23 just come and tell me their problems.  
24 INT: Do they?  
25 SALLY: Especially Dave.  
26 INT: Yeah. So can you name which kids talk about which programmes?  
27 CATHY: It depends. Sometimes its just Dave on his own but if there are others  
28 in the area they will come over and join in and I'm talking like to  
29 Emery, Jima, Dave, Hassan and Karan will come over and it will start  
30 off. Just one or two will be talking and then Kojo will say something  
31 and he will go, "But did you see..." and then it's...

Dave was an outsider and often had problems in the playground. Emery was a highly disturbed and volatile child. Both were large Year 6 boys, often involved in physical action for which they got into trouble again and again, often with Cathy herself. Cathy was a young playground assistant who was still asserting her authority. She called herself a TV addict and was in tune with much of the playground culture. Sally had worked at the school for many years. She had always lived in the area and knew several generations of many of the families. The children clearly tailored their talk to the two playground assistants in different ways. Here Cathy points out set times that TV will be mentioned by



particular children (lines 4,19,20, 28,29). Interestingly, it is Sally who says that Emery talks about dancing, not a subject easily associated with this large and often rough boy although she is interrupted by Cathy who puts it onto safer territory (lines 12,15). Sally would be a safer person for Emery to talk to about dancing than Cathy who might expose him to ridicule.

Both the older girls and boys were often particularly keen to display their back stage production knowledge. During the animation workshops many of them said that they had seen programmes on television about the making of animations or that they had read about them. In fact, so adept were they, that in one three hour session, working in groups of four or six, one Year 6 class completed, from scratch, six animated stories. The concepts of background visuals, moving figures in still shots sequenced together, voice-overs and sound effects were all part of their repertoire already even though they had not been utilised in practical production. 'Behind the scenes' programmes were clearly popular and the children used this TV knowledge both to participate in group talk and to claim social status.

In the section (iv) of this chapter I will discuss the extent to which the boys' talk about wrestling is reliant on their TV knowledge of stunts and effects as well as the media conscious posturing of the stars and their managers. This was all part of the central enjoyment of their talk about the shows and the ways in which they used TV talk in negotiating social relationships and their social place in the world.

In rounding up this section I return to the theatre. TV chat involves playing with the script, saying the words in the right way at the right time, using cues, inflections, accents, responding to other actors and acting to the audience. Non-verbal TV talk uses the physical space of the stage, it complements the script and makes it accessible to a wide audience. Getting it right involves knowing the social and political context of the play as well as the technical workings of the stage and set. All three allow the production the greatest scope for communication both between the actors and to the audience although there will always

be the mistakes, improvisations and ad hoc actions that only the actors understand and that keep the play alive and vital but also exclusive.

## **(ii) TV talk – how is it contained? Contexts and embeddedness**

This section sets out the ways in which TV talk is embedded in the realities of everyday life. Here we are dealing with the everyday running of the theatre: the different levels of management, the finances, the place of the theatre in the local and wider community.

TV talk in all its different forms is part of everyday life. It is embedded in the social structures, institutions and social relationships that form the daily lives of children. TV talk is one of the means by which children actively engage with, participate in and understand the structures around them. TV talk is itself structured by the contexts, both social and material within which it takes place. Like the theatre it relies on being able to afford access to modern technology, it is dependent on management decisions about spending priorities, it relies on contact with others both within the theatre and beyond, and it adapts to social demands.

In this section I outline four contextual factors that shape TV talk: access and economics, daily routines of family life, the playground and personal and relationship histories. These four cannot be separated as each depends on the other but in each there are distinct patterns that it is useful to highlight. I have chosen to focus most closely on playground interaction as the place where all four are most clearly in action.

### **(a) Access/economics**

There were no children in my sample without a TV at home although often children would say that it was broken and so they had missed a programme or had gone to a friend or relative's home to watch. If this situation lasted longer than a few days it was never acknowledged publicly and the children would draw heavily on the fact that there are often repeats to cover their out of date knowledge. Often children would say that they could no longer afford cable or satellite and so, for the moment, they were without until their

financial situation changed. Other homes were well equipped with cable and satellite and several television sets as well as computer games and other media. Some had one set with terrestrial channels only. Even where there were several televisions in the home children generally chose to watch the main set together with other family members. Even where this was not the case they would sometimes watch the same programme but on different sets and then talk about it afterwards. Since many channels carry the same programmes, although not always the most up to date series, access to cable and satellite did not appear to affect the ability to participate in TV talk. Having the hardware and greater access appeared to be more about status, especially amongst the boys. Status brought a level of popularity that most children aspired to but in fact those children who were acknowledged as TV experts were not always those with the most access.

For children who do not speak English at home, however, what is available on television in their home language massively affects their TV lives. It changes what they watch and the extent to which they will know all the TV references. It also affects what they watch with their parents and thus the familial relationship with TV. This aspect of the relationship between TV talk and ethnicity will be the subject of the second data chapter.

Economic access and parental choice are not the only factors here. Kings Cross is a notoriously deprived area with a serious drugs problem. One of the families was living on an estate that had recently been refurbished and fitted with a security system. The three blocks of the estate were surrounded by high security fences. To enter you had to go through several layers of camera and intercom checks. Morwen's parents described the different lives of their two daughters. Their eldest daughter Riana relied on television in a way that Morwen did not need to. Riana was never able to go outside the flat but their mother said, "its different for Morwen 'cos she can go out'. Morwen was able to go out of the flat and play downstairs in the playground but not beyond the compound fence. Her parents felt that the changed physical environment in which she lived was reflected in their daughter's different relationship with television. They described the ways in which she uses television to play with her friends in a way that her elder sister hadn't.

### **(b) Daily routines of family life**

There are several well known studies of how television operates within the family (Morley, 1986; Lull, 1988, 1991). For all the children in my study the sociability of watching TV was central and was a central platform of family life. If given the choice all the children wanted to watch with others and be able to talk about it. There was no expressed desire to be separate and to watch in private.

Here Nyota talks about what she likes to do at home.

#### **Extract 9**

- 1 INT: Alright. OK, and what do you like doing most when you are at home?  
2 NYOTA: Watching The Simpsons and um and um playing some cards with my  
3 Mum and enjoying my food which I like, we buy KFC.

TV is one of a range of activities which are important to her. She mentions a specific programme not just 'watching television'. One of the reasons she liked to watch certain TV programmes was because of the feelings of togetherness it could engender with those who were watching with her. So watching The Simpsons was a central part of family life and not an isolated activity. She liked to play cards with her mother for the same reason and to eat KFC. All these were meshed together in the collective activities of family life.

Sometimes this was regular watching of specific programmes. Often this was clearly gendered in the sense that watching wrestling or football with their father was often stated as a regular choice for the girls. Several of the boys mentioned watching The Simpsons with their fathers because they really enjoyed the fact that their fathers also thought it was funny and they enjoyed the shared humour. In one family the whole family were regular viewers of EastEnders but they watched it on three different sets.

#### **Extract 10**

- 1 INT: Do you watch it with Hortense [her elder sister]? Does Hortense like it  
2 as well?  
3 NYOTA: Yeah  
4 INT: So the two of you watch it? Do the boys watch it as well?  
5 NYOTA: Everybody watches it except for Katrin  
6 INT: Ah, so all of you together watch it?  
7 NYOTA: My brother and father have their own television to watch it there.

8 INT: So you don't watch it together, two separate rooms and yet  
9 you watch the same thing?  
10 NYOTA: Yeah, yeah.  
11 INT: Do you talk about it afterwards?  
12 NYOTA: Yeah we go, 'Did you see that, did you see that?'  
13 [Laughter]

In fact what became clear after visiting Nyota's home was that there were three sets in the house. The main set was in the living room and was mainly watched by the parents or with one or both parents. The boys had a set in their room and the girls in theirs. Nyota described how they all came together to talk about EastEnders in the kitchen after the show. Discussing soaps within the family, raising issues of relationships and family life is a well documented phenomenon and formed an important part of Gillespie's study (1995).

TV talk amongst the children was often used as a way of discussing families and family life, and to make comparisons. There are two aspects to this. Firstly by talking about episodes in popular programmes that they would all have seen such as The Simpsons, a soap or Fresh Prince of Bel Air they were able to share their more personal experiences, but at a safe distance, without having to reveal too much personal information. In the making of the boys' group video they all agreed that The Simpsons was about family life and therefore chose Bart Simpson to symbolise this most important aspect of their lives. Talking about The Simpsons with their peers meant at some level talking about family life and they frequently likened family members to characters in the series.

There was a high degree of excitement among the children when they talked about what they watched at home and what their parents' choices were. The pleasure when another family's choices overlapped with those of their own family was clear. They wanted to talk within the family about what they watched (and this only really happened when they watched together). They also needed to talk to their peers about what they watched. In addition it was an important part of feeling included and less 'other' if there were shared family interests, even if these were only confined to television choices. For Rhaxma to be able to say that she had watched a programme with her mother that her peers had also watched with theirs was full of excitement for her. It created a rare shared experience.

There were several instances of children choosing to watch something they didn't like in order to be with their parents. As we shall see in Chapter 8, this was particularly important for refugee and migrant children whose parents watched 'other language' TV, news from their country of origin or Indian videos. This was an aspect of family life that often caused embarrassment and much hilarity if revealed publicly. Those children who did not feel secure socially kept such activities well hidden.

But as well as sharing and watching together, television was also the site of conflict as other studies have demonstrated (Gunter and Svennevig, 1987; Buckingham, 1993a; Lull, 1982). Control over the TV and what it is screening is an area of tension. On several occasions both children and adults claimed control. Several of the children tried to gain status with their peers by claiming ownership of the remote control in their homes. Here Morwen talks about the conflicts between herself and her teenage sister.

#### Extract 11

- 1 INT: OK. Do you have arguments at home about what you can watch?  
2 MORWEN: Hm too much actually.  
3 INT: Tell me about them.  
4 MORWEN: Well my sister, she's watching the music channel, like, say I'm  
5 watching Nickelodeon or wrestling and I go out to the toilet or just go  
6 to look out my bedroom window or get a drink or whatever, she'll  
7 quickly go and turn it over to the music channel and then when, if she  
8 hears me coming back, she will quickly turn it back over again.  
9 INT: Oh she will?  
10 MORWEN: Yeah, but sometimes she don't. Sometimes she says, "No you've had  
11 your turn now, go down to the playground, your friends have already  
12 knocked for you so just go down".  
13 INT: Does that make you mad?  
14 MORWEN: Very! It is very irritating to have a big sister, believe me

This was a frequent topic of conversation for Morwen. The television became a forum in which age hierarchy was fought out, sometimes by stealth (line 4 -9) and sometimes more directly (lines 10 - 12).

Within the home Juba's parents claimed they had the control. Juba agreed that there were no arguments between herself and her brother but this was simply because she gave in to him and watched whatever he wanted to watch. But both told stories about heated family arguments in which equipment was sometimes smashed. After some persistence Juba's parents agreed that there were arguments over the TV. What interested me was Juba's assertion that this was not the case. It was as if she needed to keep a family secret and the television negotiations were central to this and would be too revealing if spoken about in public.

### **(c) In the Playground**

There are several factors of place that influence TV talk. In general children sought out the informal spaces in school for TV talk. Talk within the class had a different purpose: it was aimed at undermining authority and subverting the mainstream activity. In other informal contexts it was strictly social. The children were very clear about when they talked about TV. They mentioned walking to the swimming pool, going on outings, the playgrounds of home and school and the school corridors. Here I focus on the school playground.

It was the Opies' study (1959) that first brought the drama and hidden histories of the school playground to adults' attention. As Blatchford (1998) states their's was a romantic vision of creative and situated play and games. The other side of this are studies that have focused on bullying and bad behaviour in the playground. What actually happens in the playground and how children themselves perceive it has taken on more importance as children's freedom of movement becomes more restricted and there are fewer opportunities for social interaction. There is also a growing realisation of the importance of this peer social interaction in the development of social skills, cultural transmission (Sluckin, 1981; Grugeon, 1993) and identity formation. There have been studies that focus on specific aspects of identity formation particularly in relation to gender (Thorne, 1993) and sexuality (Epstein, 1999). With these exceptions there has been remarkably little focus on the role of media in these playground interactions.

The playground itself was well designed to facilitate different play areas and the children made full use of this. Different style games were played in the same places again and again. Sometimes chase games swept across the full playground but generally they were fairly contained. Many of the younger children used a fairly enclosed area containing wooden animal statues and a barricade type fencing. This area was generally rich with TV references. This was particularly the case during lunchtime play when the playground was much more crowded and the fencing provided a protection from other playground activities. One area of the playground that was heavily used by slightly older children was a long wide-beamed fence that separated off a playhouse and another wooden animal. The fence acted as a kind of separating line that had to be negotiated between the teams. The TV show Gladiators fitted this perfectly.

There was an etiquette to be learned in the playground. Games were owned and if you wanted to play you had to ask permission. Sometimes this ownership was of the group but more often than not it belonged to an individual. Games were not one off events but could run over several weeks, returning again after periods when another game had taken precedence.

#### **Extract 12    Field diary entry**

- 1    Back in the playground Rhaxma, Selve and two others are by the bars again
- 2    playing the chase game. Selve tells me it's the Gladiator game and it is
- 3    Rhaxma's game not hers. Rhaxma is clearly in charge although she hardly
- 4    ever wins.

While it was acknowledged that a game belongs to somebody, as this one is owned by Rhaxma, potential players who ask permission to join the game are allowed to renegotiate the rules. These are accepted or rejected by the owner.

#### **Extract 13    Field diary entry**

- 1    In the playground under the pergola Fatima was playing with Gwen and
- 2    Rosa. Fatima wanted to play a dinosaur game but Gwen didn't want to play
- 3    her game because it involved people dying and she didn't like this as it
- 4    reminded her of people in her family who have died. So I asked her about
- 5    this and a whole catalogue of death and destruction emerged and it sounded



6 like suicides to me. Fatima then started telling us about her grandmother  
7 who died in Jordan and lifting her body and people crying and exactly what  
8 happened. In the end they agreed to play as long as there wasn't any dying  
9 and killing

This incident took place during the screening of Walking with Dinosaurs. While most children were watching it, it was not a big topic of conversation in the playground.

However this game seems to be related.

In both these extracts the television connections are clear and yet they are of secondary importance to the children. The television link is the starting point, the cue, the shared reference point but not the central focus of enjoyment. Even where the children had not seen the whole film or were not regular viewers of a series they had usually seen the trailers or the adverts or they had picked up the references from other children in the playground. Often, however, the games followed genres rather than specific programmes so most of the children were likely to be able to participate. For instance, during the making of the girls' video Rhaxma again initiated a game that all the others could join. It was a hospital emergency scenario. All the children knew the genre and what was expected of them. They immediately found an appropriate prop. The back of one of the wooden horses became the bed. They took turns being the patient and there was much dramatic pumping of the heart, ER style, and plenty of weeping and wailing. But the point is that they all knew what to do and could all participate.

Other common genres for both boys and girls were cops and robbers and animal rescue/hospital scenarios. Both involved quite dramatic acting out, tying up and lengthy dialogue. There were frequent references to taking someone 'down town' for questioning or the use of other words and phrases that were not part of their regular vocabulary.

There were also gender specific games. There were several common themes to the girls' play. The main ones were sisters, witches, monsters and vampires, escape and good overcoming evil. The boys would sometimes play with the girls in chasing games, police and animal games but more often they played separately; monster games, fighting games, football.

As both boys and girls got older they played less role play games. They would talk about TV programmes or make small references to jokes, scenes, and characters. In the playground groups of girls walked around chatting, sometimes play fighting with the boys. At other times they practised dance and song routines. The boys played football, moved in loud gangs across the playground or sometimes hid in private spaces to join in the dance routines but in a more private forum.

The younger children's games were based on universal themes and are used in many different story telling forms so it was not surprising that often the children would deny any direct television connection. However the coincidences of broadcast programmes with play themes was too clear to be ignored. In addition the start of the broadcasting of a popular series would coincide with the emergence of a game on a related theme. There were also some interesting disagreements amongst the children about the origins of games.

#### Extract 14

1 INT: ...and you play some of those games in the playground as well don't  
2 you?  
3 MORWEN: Yeah  
4 JUBA: Yeah  
5 INT: So which programmes are the best for...  
6 NYOTA: Not most of the time  
7 INT: Not most of the time? So which games do you like playing most  
8 NYOTA: ?  
9 RHAXMA & JUBA: Sabrina  
10 INT: Hang on, Nyota!  
11 NYOTA: Well what I play is um sisters yeah  
12 INT: And that is from Sister Sister?  
13 NYOTA: No  
14 INT: That's from?  
15 NYOTA: Teenagers just from teenagers [she has a teenaged sister]  
16 RHAXMA: I watch it  
17 MORWEN: From princesses and things like that  
18 NYOTA: Yeah

It is interesting here that Rhaxma assumes that Nyota has named a TV programme, 'Teenagers' (line 15) which she claims to have watched. In fact Nyota, is rejecting the

direct TV link (lines 5, 12, 14) and claiming a greater knowledge and worldly wisdom (line 10) although she doesn't seem too sure. Morwen pulls it back to emotional connections and a world familiar to Rhaxma's fantasies as princesses is one of her favourite themes (line 16). This is an act of friendship by Morwen who is rescuing Rhaxma. In many of the discussions about the origins of games Rhaxma was the one who would make a direct connection. Rhaxma's home life was very different from her friends. She was the only Muslim girl, fairly new to both school and country, and rarely went out except to mosque school. She relied a lot on television to have something to talk about at school and she invested as much time as possible watching television for this purpose. It was also her who often initiated and owned games on the basis of media knowledge. Other children were more fluid about this. There was an interesting difference between the girls and the boys. It seemed to me that the girls made a much clearer, more conscious, separation between what they watched and what they talked about than the boys. However, through play, on a subconscious level, they integrated the two. Rhaxma seemed to know this and to use it to be included but also to take some control over the process in order to play out her favourite themes and personal problems (see chapter 9).

The question of ownership was also one of privacy, of claiming a space for the group without unwelcome supervision or interference. It allowed an intimacy. Quite frequently I noted in my field diaries that children would suddenly appear embarrassed when they became conscious of me watching them.

#### **Extract 15     Field diary entry**

1    When I return Tracy, Juba and Morwen are being 'posh and mean' sisters  
2    and Rhaxma is their slave. But she is sitting on the ground looking quite  
3    distant and upset. Tracy keeps coming over and zapping her with a gun  
4    shaped stick that apparently gives her energy but Rhaxma doesn't move. I  
5    ask her if she is upset and she says no but the others say she wanted to be a  
6    sister but they can only have one sister. I ask Rhaxma if she would like me  
7    to go away and she says nothing and then embarrassed says yes so I leave.  
8    Then I see them chasing each other around the playground

The way in which this group often used the sister game to act out slave scenarios reflected Rhaxma's personal preoccupations. Her favourite fictional character was Cinderella and as

we shall see in Chapter 9 detailing her relationship with TV, this was closely related in some ways to how she viewed her life.

Many of these games had very set forms that were repeated day after day. One of these was what I called the Titanic game although the children never made a direct reference to the film. This is Rhaxma again telling me what is happening as we watch the others playing on the main structure from the other side of the playground.

**Extract 16**

- 1 People are on board
- 2 The ship started to sink
- 3 We are outside in a dark place
- 4 We get trapped
- 5 We can't open the door
- 6 Someone, George, comes and opens the door
- 7 He starts killing people we want to climb up but get stuck on the tyres [the
- 8 play structure is surrounded by tyres]
- 9 We fall down sometimes
- 10 We climb up and get stuck on the black things in the water
- 11 George runs after us
- 12 It ends when we all swim to the surface and the helicopter comes

This was told without hesitation. Although she is not herself playing on this occasion she identifies with the players using 'we' in the description. She has played it often before and George, acting as the master of ceremonies, plays a similar role in several of the games owned by the girls.

Partly because of the continuous nature of the games but also because of their intimacy, certain of them are reserved for certain players, as with George above, and locations. Juba was a great lover of witch games both at home and at school but she was clear that the games she played at home were different and based on different programmes.

In an individual interview she talked about the ways in which she and her home friends always watched and played Hocus Pocus together. Each one took on a particular character from the series. The games they played based on this programme continued over a long

period but demanded the same players. This game was not transferable to school because this group didn't all go to the same school. The games she played at school also carried on over a long period. She described a different witch theme game based on a different programme and one that was based on sisters but had a heavy school oriented theme of teachers who needed slaves because they couldn't do everything themselves. So the relationships she had with both groups of friends revolved around either the close or long distance sharing of specific TV programmes. It depended on location but also on the playing of games evolving from these TV programmes, which they all knew intimately.

#### **(d) Developing histories together**

Both within the family and with friends in and out of school television plays a significant role in building autobiographical memories or histories. Television appeared to be able to locate them in time and place almost in the same way that family photos or stories are able to do (Spence and Holland, 1991; Kuhn, 1985). The games described above formed the core of these group histories. The main point of this short section is to highlight the continuous nature and cumulative effect of these shared television based interactions. They were not one off events but formed a solid base of connection and communication.

We all now have childhood memories linked to media experiences. Often the children referred to programmes they used to watch. This was usually as part of the process of claiming a maturity superior to younger children but it also acted to reinforce a shared history. In the boys' group, children's (and girls) programmes such as Power Puff Girls and Rug Rats and Teenage Ninja Turtles were called out and ridiculed, even though they did in fact often watch them. For the girls there was almost hysterical excitement when they remembered programmes such as The Tweenies or Rosie and Jim they used to watch. Several of the girl's posters contained pictures from programmes they no longer watched but for which they still held tremendous affection and nostalgia. In the same way games they played in the playgrounds also performed the function of building a group memory that they could draw on in times of tension. Many of the games had been played so often and many of the television stories had been told so many times over long periods that they

formed a resource that the children could draw on for security to overcome current arguments.

Some of the refugee and migrant children mentioned programmes they used to watch before they came to this country. Rhaxma still enjoyed watching an Italian programme she watched as a toddler even though she no longer understood Italian. It offered her a personal historical reference point. She had no photos from that time but the television kept the memory alive. Estava and Denis often talked about what they watched when they visited Portugal enjoying the fact that these memories felt unique to them. However, many children were reluctant to mention these 'home' programmes in school, keeping them as private histories.

Drawing this section together, these television histories cannot be separated from the material facts that determine access, from the formations of family life and from the everyday informal interactions of the playground. These are, of course, only some of the strands of everyday life but they serve to illustrate the ways in which television talk is embedded in everyday life and in the constructions of both short and long term connections. The production of the play relies on the fact that it is itself supported by and formed by other aspects of the running of the theatre.

### **(iii) TV talk – how does it operate? Social relationships**

In this section we move into examining how TV talk operates in the maintenance of friendship groups and within the group dynamics themselves. It is through mutual support and internal power plays that the group develops an identity and public image but also through which individual identities are formed. The selection and rejection of the cast, what roles are allocated and how they are managed is central here. Rehearsals develop the characters of the play and decide what parts of the stage the actors are to use. Actors have to develop thick skins to be able to survive rejection and to go on to the next audition. Again I draw on research discussed in Chapter 3 but also on work on young people's

friendship groups and identity formations. Thorne (1993) talks about the ways in which children ‘do gender’, stressing the active ways in which children form and contest notions of gender. She also talks about the impossibility of binary oppositions and the fluidity with which struggles for power run across and through lines of difference within the group. Hey (1997), in her study of girls’ friendships also focuses on the dramatic performances of friendship, that both include and exclude, and the often ritualistic nature of friendship negotiations. Neither of these studies include talk about television in their studies, an omission I find surprising. Epstein (1999), however, in observing playground games in relation to sexuality, notes the ways in which Blind Date is adapted to fit into a kiss and chase game that plays with sexual power and sexuality.

This section is divided into two parts. Firstly I look at some of the ways in which the groups maintained their public image through TV talk. Then I divide the second part - discussion about the internal group interactions – into four; vying for status, age negotiations, gender patrols and exclusions. Later, in Chapter 9, where I discuss Rhaxma I expand the discussion of exclusion and her particular resilience and survival.

#### **(a) Group identity – looking outside - creating a public image**

I have already described some of the ways in which group membership was negotiated: the auctioneering of TV references to gain approval, the ways in which playground games were negotiated and the ways in which non verbal TV talk was used by children who were not fluent in English. All these are risky, with the potential for rejection. But here I want to concentrate on how the group is maintained once it has been formed.

The groups seemed to have an agreed repertoire that identified them. The assertion of viewing preferences was ritualised, and relied on endless repetition of detail and story. Favourite stories would be retold repeatedly bouncing back and forth between the members of the group. However, the boundaries between groups were not as set as this implies, with most children liking the same programmes. On the contrary there were some clear differences and also preferences for one story or episode over another.

**Extract 17**

1 SAMUEL: I'm going to watch Fresh Prince of Bel Air. It's going to be continued  
2 from yesterday.  
3 ESTAVA: It's wicked. They are moving houses yeah.  
4 JIMA: Who's seen the episode where Will gets there first....  
5 SAMUEL: This is their Mum in the kitchen  
6 [He starts acting it out and seems very keen on doing the accents and  
7 telling the stories. He can't usually do this and so is enjoying it. Jima  
8 keeps trying to interrupt, as does Estava]  
9 ESTAVA: Have you seen the one where Carlton takes the drugs but is  
10 annoyed...?  
11 [This goes on for a while, then Estava takes a long time to get going  
12 with a story but the others give him time. He is telling one in which  
13 they are in hospital and the parents are going to stay over in the  
14 hospital and the man takes the bed and says his wife can sleep in the  
15 chair. They all think this is really funny. Samuel comes in and starts  
16 taking over more fluently but Jima interrupts him.]  
17 JIMA: Have you seen the episode where Wilfred the cleaner keeps wanting to  
18 be a millionaire and he keeps doing the lottery and stuff and one day,  
19 yeah, they were watching the show and there was some questions in  
20 the show and Wilfred he guesses it and he gets it wrong and then  
21 Carlton goes, 'Even Will knows that and all he reads is the back of  
22 those Cornflakes boxes.' And then Will gets angry and says, 'At least I  
23 don't fit inside one!'  
24 [They all fall about laughing repeating 'cornflakes box']  
25 ESTAVA: That's dread!

Here three of the boys are jostling with each other. We are out of their territory waiting for a bus on Southwark Bridge. Samuel opens the conversation (line 1) and immediately gets a response from Estava (line 3). Jima tries to pull it back to him in line 4 but Samuel reclaims it strongly by going into acting out (line 6), keeping Jima at bay. Samuel can't sustain it, however, when Estava, who is a major player in the group, starts his story (line 9). Because of his status in the group the others give him time. Samuel manages to retake the stage briefly (line 16) only to be pushed aside again by Jima (line 17). Interestingly, Denis, the fourth member of the group, does not participate at all. Although there are clearly competitive elements here the main purpose of this story telling is to bring the group together. This is not so much a matter of internal power plays but of pulling together in an alien environment.



The detailed knowledge reflected in their talk was also a way of asserting a sense of ownership of the programme. Programmes were seen as symbolic of the groups. Hence the girls' group saw the Power Puff Girls as 'theirs'. But the sense of ownership, as we saw in the previous section, also went beyond the individual programmes and included whole channels. There were several instances of discussions around whether a programme was for adults or children. South Park and The Simpsons were most often talked about in this way. The format was seen as indicating that it was for children. The fact that it featured 'small people' was also significant and much of the humour was seen as being too crazy to interest an adult. But the main point here is that TV becomes a private child space. In many activity sessions there was an atmosphere of great intimacy that couldn't be pinned down by the words spoken but more in the tone of voice and body language.

The younger children would frequently act out characters from TV shows either individually or in groups. In the girls' group, games sometimes revolved around playing groups of characters. The Power Puff Girls for example allowed each girl to be her favourite character and it was clear that this was important for the game and the group. Each child could say why she was that character. In the Year 6 animation workshop one group of Bengali girls claimed different characters in the show they were animating. They became very involved in the programme and there were violent arguments about which one of them would get to hold the main star's hand. Wrestling provided a similar focus for the older boys. Each boy claimed different stars as their own. So the groups they saw on TV were reflected within their groups and gave them an added sense of cohesion.

#### **(b) Group identity – looking inside - negotiations within**

Children also used TV talk within their friendship groups to negotiate hierarchies, to patrol the borders of age and gender and to create exclusions. Above I discussed TV talk and group membership almost implying that these groups were stable. In fact they were under constant renegotiation, making them fluid and multiple even if there were some core friendships that remained constant. I am interested here in how TV talk operated in the claiming of status within the group, how it was used to discuss issues close to children's hearts and how TV talk worked to strengthen social conformity.

**(c ) Vying for status**

In section (I) I discussed the importance of ‘getting it right’, the need to have a full knowledge of programmes, production processes and the industry and the ways in which children use these knowledges to gain access, and to initiate social contact. This is an ongoing process. There was a constant reconfirming and challenging of knowledge within the group. Those who had the greatest knowledge were acknowledged as experts and not to be argued with, unless it was in a real challenge for power. In the boys’ group, as we have seen, Samuel and Jima often sparred on this ground. Samuel adopted a form of almost continuous guerrilla warfare in his attempts to gain status, while Jima held onto his kingship. However, as we see below even Samuel would not challenge Jima on some territory. Here the boys’ group is drawing while talking about favourite wrestlers.

**Extract 18**

- 1    SAMUEL:    I’m just going to write Goldberg 318
- 2    ESTAVA:    318?
- 3    JIMA:        It is.
- 4    ESTAVA:    No it ain’t!
- 5    JIMA:        Yes it is
- 6    SAMUEL:    Estava never argue with Jima about wrestling

As a researcher I was often tested and found lacking in my TV knowledge. The children grew quite tolerant of this over time but they were also keen to compare their knowledge with my relative ignorance. There were times when I felt I was being initiated into the group. In one session with the boys Jima tested me on The Simpsons and made it his business to educate me. The same applied later to South Park. The two Turkish/Kurdish girls Leyla and Selve were very keen for me to know about their favourite programmes and took pleasure in my ignorance.

Once you were secure with your reputation as someone who 'knows' TV then you were able to claim additional status by talking about programmes unknown to your friends. If you had dared to try this before you were established then you would be ridiculed. So, for a child to talk about a programme on a different, perhaps other language, channel they had

to be established within the accepted norm of TV expertise beforehand, otherwise the difference would not be tolerated.

The most common way in which the boys claimed status was to claim a knowledge of programmes that are generally considered to be for adult, rather than child, viewing. This implied staying up later and or having more control at home over what you were allowed to watch or of being prepared to break the rules and getting away with it (Kelley et al, 1999).

**Extract 19    Field diary entry**

1    The boys took turns videoing each other. Jima was keen to do a scene from  
2    South Park but none of the others knew it. When I ask why, only Jima is keen  
3    and knows they all say because it is on too late and they are in bed. This is  
4    one of the reasons Jima likes it. Staying up late gives him status and he can  
5    rub in to them that he has stayed up late. Here, during the preparation of the  
6    boys' group video Jima is again asserting himself. He claims centre stage by  
7    suggesting South Park as the scene they will act out, knowing that the others  
8    are not as familiar with the programmes as he is. In fact he can gain multiple  
9    status here: he knows a subversive programme better than they do and he  
10   obviously stays up later than they do, implying less parental control over him.  
11   The text of South Park in fact also plays with this question of age and power  
12   and concepts of childhood (Nixon, 2002) and Jima uses it to good effect. This  
13   brings us to the next area of group negotiation

**(d) Age negotiations**

One of the reasons that South Park was so popular amongst the children was that it is not clear who its audience is 'supposed' to be. On the one hand its format appears to be aimed at a child audience. On the other the content is adult but with a childish edge. To make matters more ambiguous it was originally broadcast in a late night slot and then became available at an earlier time as well. The boys claimed it as their programme on the grounds that it is a cartoon and talked about 'little people' but the girls clearly saw it as adult because it was 'rude', even though they did enjoy watching it.

Morwen talked about her enjoyment of South Park. She had included it on her poster about television but clearly had mixed feelings about it. She was aware of the fact that it is

considered an adult programme and her uncertainty about this is expressed in her recalling an article she had read in a magazine.

**Extract 20**

1 MORWEN: I've got South Park [on her poster] and it says I like South Park but not  
2 the rude words.  
3 INT: Do you watch a lot of South Park?  
4 MORWEN: Not a lot, just sometimes. If it's on, like. I don't watch all the time. I  
5 watch it mostly if it's on but every time I'm watching MTV so if it's a  
6 boring song and my mum decides to turn it over to VH1 , if VH1 has  
7 got a boring song she'll turn it on go down and up and see what's on  
8 and when she sees South Park my sister says 'YES, keep it on, keep it  
9 on'.  
10 INT: So would you watch it if your sister didn't?  
11 MORWEN: I don't know 'cos in the magazine it says um that South Park, to all  
12 South Park lovers and it's two whole pages about South Park and it's  
13 got questions like, do your parents know that you watch it and 69%  
14 said no they don't.  
15 INT: What do you like about it?  
16 MORWEN: Just the fat one. He's so funny. And Kenny. He dies in every episode.  
17 INT: Is that funny?  
18 MORWEN: Yeah, 'cos he has um he always wears this orange coat with a  
19 hood and he looks like a hair dryer when he's standing up and then  
20 after every time he talks, you can't hear what he says, its brbrbrbtr. He  
21 dies and when he dies the rats eat his eyes.  
22 INT: And that's funny.

Morwen is clearly ambivalent about whether she should be watching South Park. She enjoys what she understands of the humour but clearly feels uneasy about much of it. This is expressed in her not liking the 'rude words'. But what is interesting here is that she doesn't refer to any objection that her mother might or might not have to her watching, but refers to an outside authority which implies that to watch it you are required to go behind your parents' back. Unlike the boys, she is not yet ready to challenge or disregard this control and does not feel that it would gain her any status in her group to do so.

But the key here is the way in which all the children played with the perceived boundaries of child and adult through TV talk (Buckingham, 1994. Davies et al, 19..). Television is prime material for this with its many public panics about what is appropriate and the

effects on children of watching ‘unsuitable’ programmes. Children were fully aware of this and they were also keen to claim an age older than their own.

Children were frequently put down if their TV choices betrayed their childishness. Yet at the same time, for the girls, this was mixed with nostalgia. Often they swung from talking lovingly together about their childhood programmes and revealed that they still privately enjoyed these. Then, within the same day, they would be ridiculing the same programmes. Teletubbies was a favourite for this. While at the same time as acting out the four characters and saying who their favourites were and clearly enjoying the togetherness this evoked they would claim that they hated it and only watched it because their younger siblings did.

Likewise, in someone’s absence it would be claimed that they liked a certain programme, considered to be too young, as a way of putting them down. This was a form of gossip and ‘bad mouthing’ that was generally accepted. In the extract below the Ninja Turtles are used as symbolising a younger age

**Extract 21**

- 1 SAMUEL: I like Ninja Turtles as well
- 2 JIMA: Ninja Turtles get crap
- 3 [silence]
- 4 JIMA: Teenage Human Turtles are good
- 5 SAMUEL: Do you watch on Fox Kids?

A bit later they are choosing comics. Jima wants a South Park comic but says that Estava would like Ninja Turtles one.

- 1 SAMUEL: Does he!?

Here Jima and Samuel are negotiating the status of Ninja Turtles and their relationship with them. On previous occasions this programme has been clearly put down in the group as being only for younger children. Here, they are feeling out the territory on a more intimate one to one basis. Jima is clearly nervous or preoccupied as he gets the name wrong after the silence (line 4) and comes close to admitting that in fact they do still hold affection for the programme or phenomenon (line 4). Samuel is also taking the upper hand

as an insurance policy as he knows Jima does not have Fox Kids at home (line 5). In the end they decide to mock Estava (line 6) who is not on the outing, by identifying him with the turtles thus freeing both of them from this dangerous territory. They are safe to do this in his absence and thus both are able to claim the greater status.

**(e) Gender patrols**

For the boys there was clearly often a sexual overtone to the ways in which they claimed status in the group. Most of the boys enjoyed Jerry Springer, mainly for the fights, bad language and arguments, but they also enjoyed the sexual content. One of the Year 6 boys, an outsider trying to gain acceptance in the group, was quite insistent about advertising his ownership of the unedited adult Jerry Springer tapes during the weekend away in Dorset when the boys were discussing programmes they were missing.

Programme choices were often clearly gendered. However among the older children there was a greater degree of cross over and often the most popular programmes like The Simpsons were enjoyed by both sexes. Some choices were less publicly stated however. Several of the boys agreed that they enjoyed soaps when I spoke to them in private but in the group these were only mentioned, if at all, after all the other more differentiated choices were made.

There were incidents of auctioneering that were clearly aimed at accepting or rejecting programmes based on perceptions of whether these were girls' or boys' programmes. But on the whole it was the details within the programmes that the children used to patrol gender (Epstein, 1999; Epstein and Steinberg, 1997). The Simpsons, for example, plays a lot with gender stereotypes so it is fertile ground for these discussions. While the behaviour of Homer was often recognised by the boys as being sexist and anti social, it was also thoroughly enjoyed and approved. As Buckingham argues (1993b) this is a continuous process of checking and rechecking what masculine code is acceptable, of raising your head above the parapet only to be shot down.

Not only does TV talk confirm stereotypes and patrol the borders of what is considered acceptable gendered behaviour within the group, it also allows children to play with those stereotypes. Several of the boys' favourite programmes used this a lot in their humour. Again we have The Simpsons and South Park here but also Rug Rats, Friends and several feature films. As we shall see in the next section much of the boys' talk about wrestling played with the confirmation and breaking of stereotypes and the resultant humour.

The girls group was very keen on 'girl power'. As we have seen their favourite programme for some time was The Power Puff Girls and many of their games played with having power, often in areas where, in reality, they had very little. But even this idea of power was patrolled. Rhaxma was impressed by the girl in Mulan but hadn't understood the subtleties of style and dress that the other girls held onto while still espousing the girl power cause. Here, during a session in which the girls are making their posters and cutting out pictures from magazines, they discuss Mulan.

**Extract 22**

- 1 RHAXMA: She's Moolan
- 2 MORWEN: Mulan not Moolan
- 3 RHAXMA: I call her Moolan
- 4 MORWEN: Mulan is crap, don't like it.
- 5 JUBA: I don't like The King and I [referring to one of the pictures]
- 6 RHAXMA: What?
- 7 JUBA: I don't like The King and I
- 8 MORWEN: Nor do I
- 9 RHAXMA: The King and I?
- 10 NYOTA: I don't like Mulan either
- 11 JUBA: Mulan, Mulan Mulan it's only when she goes, when she goes training
- 12 to be a fighter
- 13 MORWEN: She becomes like a man
- 14 NYOTA: Yeah
- 15 JUBA: She even cut her hair, she even cut her hair
- 16 RHAXMA: Do you watch it Juba? Did you watch it?
- 17 JUBA: Yeah, and she cuts her hair with a sword

Rhaxma points out the poster in her magazine as part of the auctioneering process described above (line 1). Initially it is the fact that Rhaxma has mispronounced the name that takes precedence (line 2). Rhaxma stands her ground here but then has to endure the

group's rejection of her choice on the grounds that Mulan cuts her hair off and tries to be a man (lines 13, 15, 17). At one point the discussion begins to drift onto another film (line 5), which Rhaxma doesn't know (lines 6, 9) but Nyota, always keen to put Rhaxma down, brings it firmly back (line 10). Rhaxma is still puzzled and tries to check again whether Juba actually watches it (line 16). Much of this rejection is done through tone of voice, facial expression and body language. The message is that Mulan breaks the acceptable boundaries of female behaviour. Rhaxma doesn't seem convinced by this argument but in the end can't quite bring herself to include it in her poster and risk the disapproval of the group. Again, as with the boys above, she has raised her head above the parapet and checked out the intensity of the fire.

So in what ways does TV talk initiate girls who have recently arrived in this country into the ways in which girls should behave? The answer is complex. For Rhaxma her role at home was clear but at school she had to negotiate a changing spectrum of expectations. I will discuss her personal dilemmas in this area in greater depth in Chapter 9. This was also true of Leyla. It was often painful seeing her fall into many media traps. She quickly became a fan of the Spice Girls but seemed to be unaware of the underlying significance of their girl power appeal to other girls or the ways in which boys hated them. When their popularity waned she was reluctant to move on and was jeered and made fun of primarily by other recent arrivals who were quicker to keep track of the changing fashion. So again while TV talk allowed an inclusion into the discussions of age and gender in this society it was incumbent on the newcomers to keep their differences to themselves, at least until they were accepted by the group.

#### **(f) Exclusions**

Some social exclusions amongst the children were clearly based on TV choice and knowledge or the lack of it. More often than not, however, TV talk became the platform on which existing exclusions were acted out. In one minor playground incident that I observed, three boys in the Infants were playing during morning break. Firstly Gami claimed status by saying he went to the "movies" (interestingly using the American word) and saw Godzilla which was frequently being acted out in the playground at this time. In



addition he was showing off his popcorn. He was put down by Tom who claimed he had already seen the film “a long time ago”. Gami was rescued by his friend, Ricardo, who raised the stakes by saying that he and Gami had gone on their own to see the film, thus claiming independence of movement. Gami reinforced this by talking some more about the film. Tom gave in under this joint pressure and admitted to his restricted movements, whereupon Ricardo pushed home his advantage by listing all the houses he is allowed to go to on his own. Tom then walked away, leaving the scene of his humiliation. The whole exchange was aimed at excluding Tom (who became more and more silent) by invoking a “movie” that none of them, it later transpired, had seen. In this case the popcorn (associated with film going) had been the prompt.

What makes these exclusions so powerful is that there is always the possibility that if you get your media choices and TV talk ‘right’ then you will be included, and many children work hard at achieving this. In this incident Tom had attempted it and failed but on another occasion it might have been successful.

In the boys’ group Samuel took every opportunity open to him to keep up with the necessary media knowledge despite the restrictions at home. However, he still frequently fell into the 'nerd' trap in which he had been placed. Both he and Iraj, another Year 6 boy, suffered from this label. But Iraj successfully broke out and developed a real skill and knowledge of dance music and dance moves. By the end of Year 6 he had managed to work his way into a high degree of peer respect through this. But only a few months earlier on the away weekend he and Samuel were making unacceptable media choices.

**Extract 23     Field diary entry**

1     At one point Iraj starts up a conversation/interchange about the current Grange  
2     Hill story line in which a girl has died trying to get out of the school to get  
3     away from a fire and one boy is blaming the other for her death. Fortunately I  
4     had watched it the evening before otherwise I would not have picked up on it.  
5     It was interesting that it was Iraj and that he had chosen Grange Hill (probably  
6     allowed to watch this by his parents). He has not realized that this will not gain  
7     him credit with the others. He does manage some acceptance through Samuel  
8     engaging with him enthusiastically. It crosses the corridor to Jima’s table but  
9     then dies.

Grange Hill would not be considered acceptable by Iraj's peers. Although many of them would watch it, it was considered too 'young' and too conformist for any of them to be seen to engage in a discussion about it. Since both Iraj and Samuel are on the edges they cannot afford to persist in their talk once their choice has been silently rejected by Jima, the TV expert.

These examples are about individual exclusions but there were the larger exclusions or self exclusions played out through TV talk, or rather in the gaps in the TV talk. As I have mentioned before, many of the Bengali children I spoke to admitted they would never talk in school about the Hindi or Bengali videos they watched at home, or the religious videos their parents watched. If they did it was only quite privately. The only adult at the school they would talk to about this was the one Bengali playground assistant. These private pleasures were not to be admitted into the public domain. Amongst the Turkish children the same censorship operated. There was no sharing of any media experience other than mainstream western programmes, beyond the very small Turkish group of children, and then again very privately.

The two Turkish children who were part of my study who, when they first arrived, had been keen to demonstrate their Turkish songs and dances, rapidly changed and after nine months would only struggle with half learned English songs. Leyla who was the butt of bullying and teasing in her class often exposed herself to this through her slow grasp of what was acceptable in her media choices.

But there was also another level of exclusion that I touched and that was harder to determine. That was the way in which international exclusions were played out in the school. One of the children, for example, who gave Leyla the hardest time in her class was another newcomer, a boy from Kosovo. He picked up on the exclusion that Leyla was experiencing and exacerbated it. I thought it was another example of two newcomers jockeying for position except that it appeared to have a particular edge to it. He was from a Catholic family, here because of the war. It occurred to me that there was a strong

possibility that the strong anti-Turkish sentiments felt in Kosovo amongst the Albanian population were being played out here under the guise of something else. Ironically, if this was the case, he himself had misinterpreted the situation. Leyla was in fact Kurdish and she and her sister often exhibited strong anti-Turkish opinions, especially after the capture of Ocalan, the Kurdish leader. So the web of exclusions was highly complex, drawing on both personal animosity and power plays but also broader levels of racism and cultural prejudice.

In this section I have discussed the ways in which programmes and particular aspects of TV talk about programmes come to identify the friendship group and to patrol the boundaries of behaviour within the group. Children negotiate and vie for inclusion, learning what TV talk is acceptable. The other side of this coin is that this same TV talk is also aimed at excluding. It is a selection process in the same way that the cast of the play, or the students at a drama school, are selected and trained and those with different styles or different training are excluded or passed over. What is powerful here is the ways in which TV talk often acts to confirm the multiple social exclusions of the wider society.

#### **(iv) TV talk – how is it framed? Texts**

This chapter has set out a framework within which I have considered my data. I outlined different types of TV talk, emphasising that this is a creative and moving field but one in which it is possible to identify familiar and repeated forms. I then outlined some of the ways in which TV talk is situated in everyday life, showing that while the children can be creative, this is within the boundaries of their social situation and relationships. In the case of watching wrestling with their fathers, for example, the wish to spend time with their fathers was the motivating force but the text was then used in social contact with friends. I then moved on to focus on the ways in which TV talk framed the social relations themselves both by identifying the friendship groups and by patrolling social norms and hierarchies. I drew on discussions within the girls' group to illustrate the ways in which talk about a girl media character in Mulan, supported by TV talk at other times about The

Power Puff Girls, informed one newcomer about what was and was not acceptable within the group.

In this section I consider more directly the ways in which the children's favourite programmes themselves determine TV talk. The hallmark of Chandler in Friends, for example, is that he changes the usual emphasis of phrases, a form of word play picked up, used and adapted by the children. In South Park the repetition of Kenny's death facilitates much humour and play acting both with reality (and adult concerns about violence on TV) and about their own friendship power plays. The children draw on these, sometimes verbatim, sometimes in adaptation, but the point is that the text has allowed but also framed its creative use, much like the script of a play being rehearsed and adapted in the theatre.

In this final section of this chapter I will be focussing on three texts, wrestling, the news and The Simpsons, that were often referred to and played with by the children. I will be discussing how these three very different programmes all provide a platform used by children to negotiate peer and family relationships. In the process, I will be showing the ways in which the different categories and contexts of TV talk that I have been discussing in this chapter come together, and interplay with each other.

#### **(a) Wrestling**

Watching and talking about wrestling was a central TV fixation for most of the boys in the upper school and privately some of the girls. There are several channels that broadcast wrestling particularly over Friday and Saturday evenings with repeats on Sundays. Sometimes children would gather to watch together but more often they watched individually and then would share it later with their friends. Often they videoed it and watched it together at another time.

Barthes' essay on wrestling (1973) likens it to theatre, a form of pantomime, where the form is more important than the content. Playing with the form of the fight, like playing with the television text of the fight, is the main aim of the game. It is the 'spectacle of

excess’, or the image of passion, rather than the passion itself, that draws the audience and through which the wrestlers play with central notions of suffering, defeat and justice. Fiske (1987), following Bahktin’s notion of the carnivalesque, describes wrestling as parody, as an excessive and physical suspension of social order, inverting the rules of play. Central to the pleasures of television wrestling is the knowledge of the back stage dramas between wrestlers and between wrestlers and their managers. These are also carefully orchestrated and leaked, adding to the drama of the fights. Such knowledge appears to offer viewers a feeling of ‘empowerment’ and involvement that heightens the pleasure of viewing (British Board of Film Classification, 2001). All of this tallies with the ways in which particularly the boys used wrestling in their TV talk.

In the playground there were always wrestling matches being enacted or performed. These often acted as a way of trying to get around the playground ban on fighting. Each wrestler has well known favourite moves that the boys adopted and that were identified instantly by their friends. Details of exactly where feet were placed, how they gripped each other and who fell in what manner were part of the everyday exchange between friends. This allowed a level of physical contact between boys (or, in the home, between father and daughter) that might not otherwise have been possible.

I will start by examining one long extract from a taped session with the boys’ group a couple of days after they had returned from a school weekend away in Dorset. Since this is an extremely long extract I will divide it into sections and discuss each section separately. I will then look briefly at the ways in which the girls also talked about and used wrestling.

**Extract 24**

1    SAMUEL:    It was a bad thing that we missed wrestling

2    ESTAVA:    Yeah

3    SAMUEL:    We missed wrestling on TNT, WCW

4    ESTAVA:    ... and Sky

5    SAMUEL:    Yeah and WWF

6    INT:        Is that what you watch on Friday night usually?

7    JIMA:        No Saturday

8    SAMUEL:    Friday I watch WCW and Thunder sometimes and on Sunday I watch

9                WWF

10 ESTAVA: Saturday  
 11 SAMUEL: Sunday  
 12 INT: What's WWF?  
 13 ESTAVA: It's the wrestling  
 14 SAMUEL: I watch it on Sunday  
 15 JIMA: World Wrestling Federation  
 16 INT: Oh. OK World Wrestling Federation  
 17 SAMUEL: It's on Saturday but they repeat on Sunday, that's when I watch it  
 18 INT: OK. So you all watch wrestling  
 19 ALL: Yeah  
 20 INT: Do you do wrestling?  
 21 ESTAVA: Yeah, I keep on doing, yeah me and my brother  
 22 INT: Why wrestling and not boxing?  
 23 JIMA: Yuk, man  
 24 ESTAVA: Cos it's too violent, it's too blood...  
 25 SAMUEL: Yeah  
 26 ESTAVA: ...but in wrestling its fake and its good  
 27 INT: It's all acting up?  
 28 ESTAVA: Yeah, and they...  
 29 JIMA: and they do, and they do  
 30 SAMUEL: [acting out]  
 31 INT: So what age did you start watching wrestling?  
 32 SAMUEL: It's his Dad is the one who taught him to watch wrestling [laughter]  
 33 INT: Yes?  
 34 ESTAVA: When I just came to England I just...  
 35 SAMUEL: His dad is cool  
 36 INT: Is his Dad cool?  
 37 ESTAVA: When I just came to England I said um let me just watch Sky and I  
 38 settled down and it was past nine o'clock 'cos I was bored and then I  
 39 thought I would put the channel and I thought hm 'cool' and I stayed  
 40 here watching it all through it.

In this first section Samuel voices the feelings of the group: that missing wrestling is a 'bad thing' (line 1). They had not been able to watch it while away because the TVs in their rooms did not have satellite or cable. This meant that they had lost out on both the immediate pleasures of watching but also the future pleasures of talking about it and adding to their knowledge. He then goes on to compete with Jima about knowing where and when wrestling is broadcast. It is a ritualized listing of the possibilities. In fact neither boy actually had these choices at home; Jima because they didn't have satellite and they had access to only one cable channel and Samuel because his viewing was restricted at home and he spent most of Saturday in church. But the point is the need to demonstrate your knowledge as a demonstration of your 'ownership' of the programme. Samuel is put

on the defensive here by Estava (line 10) but Jima, as an acknowledged expert, is not challenged.

In line 21 Estava agrees that they do wrestle but doesn't understand that I don't mean play fighting but really learning how to wrestle. I have missed the point. This is not a sport but is essentially about show and stuntsmanship. They took pride in the fact that it is fictionalised, 'fake', 'acting up'. Estava and his brother wrestled and practiced the moves, as they did with their friends, as part of their love of acting out TV scenarios. In addition this ritualised physical contact was safe and couldn't be seen as crossing sexual/homosexual boundaries. By contrast boxing is rejected as violent (line 24). It is the showmanship of the wrestlers that is admired not their ability to fight. In fact Samuel demonstrates this in line 30 when he starts to act it out as part of the TV talk. In this part of the extract there is an increasing level of excitement. They are all clamouring to get their words in and, by line 28, are speaking over each other. Jima is given extra status by Samuel because his father is also keen on watching wrestling (line 32). This was an important part of Jima's home life and something that he and his father could do together without conflict. This reference to his father as teacher gives him added status. We have moved into personal territory. Estava then brings in his personal memory of watching wrestling when he first arrived in this country (line 37). One element of this must have been that the excitement did not depend on mastery of the English language.

**Extract 25**

1 JIMA: ... and especially when you saw Sable  
2 SAMUEL: Aaahh [laughing]  
3 INT: When you saw what?  
4 SAMUEL: Sable. It's a lady, she's a wrestler, she fights wicked 'oui'  
5 INT: She's the one who took on two men once?  
6 JIMA: Nah, nah nah nah it weren't the one  
7 ESTAVA: That's China  
8 JIMA: That's China, she saw that.....  
9 SAMUEL: The men are weak them  
10 ESTAVA: Oh that's why man  
11 JIMA: She came to my house and watched it that day [referring to me visiting  
12 his house one Saturday afternoon] [giggle]

13 INT: I couldn't believe it. Actually I used to like watching wrestling. There  
14 was a time when I liked watching wrestling, just for a short time. It was  
15 the acting, that's right. Really weird though. Ok so...  
16 JIMA: Did you used to see this man that used to...  
17 INT: Oh that was years ago. I'm old you know. This was a long time ago.  
18 JIMA: ...used to stretch his arm up like that and go phew and make...

Jima changes the subject and raises the sexual stakes (line 1). The discussion of women wrestlers was often returned to and their attitude to them was ambiguous. On the one hand they appeared to admire them but on the other they broke too many stereotypes and as women were considered unacceptable. When, in a different session, one of the boys chose to draw a woman wrestler he was ridiculed and told he was 'sick' and would get into trouble although from whom it was never quite clear. The girls also had mixed feelings about them. Nyota considered Sable to be a 'show off'. As with Mulan these women break too many rules for the girls to feel comfortable with them.

But Jimma corrects me when I get the wrong woman (line 6). Again it is important to have and use the knowledge. Samuel is the one again who voices the feelings of the group: men who fight women and lose are weak (line 9). He adds the emphasis to this of 'them'. Samuel appears to adopt a Caribbean way of speaking with the emphatic 'oui' (line 4) and now again the Caribbean emphatic 'them' (line 9). Jimma is busy explaining why I know about women wrestlers and that I watched them at his house. This clearly crosses a line between private and public that he feels he needs to explain to the others (lines 11).

**Extract 26**

1 INT: But it must wreck their bodies don't you think?  
2 JIMA: Oh no  
3 SAMUEL: They put ketchup patches in their nose and when somebody hits it  
4 bursts open and you think it's blood  
5 INT: You know that for fact?  
6 SAMUEL: Yeah, you see it when they thing, when they showed the wrestling  
7 thing , how they do their thing  
8 JIMA: Yeah I know, but they don't put ketchup down there. They go 'bing'  
9 and then it goes erererer. It's something like...  
10 ESTAVA: Kane, Kane [softly]



11 JIMA: Um no you know how they do it for Kane right. You know when he  
 12 comes in he goes like that and he stretches his arm or something. He  
 13 goes... [acting out]. Do you ever watch Superstars?  
 14 ESTAVA: Yeah  
 15 JIMA: And did they show when the wrestling thing was getting build?  
 16 ESTAVA: Oh yeah, yeah they always show it  
 17 JIMA: And they pressed the red button and then it went errrrrr. OK  
 18 SAMUEL & ESTAVA: Yeah  
 19 JIMA: That's how they make the blood stuff or whatever. There's around  
 20 sixty buttons round there  
 21 ESTAVA: Yeah it was like, it was like the whole of this room, it just had  
 22 computers, televisions  
 23 SAMUEL: Where?  
 24 ESTAVA: In wrestling, cos they need to see all of it cos it's acting so they need to  
 25 INT: You mean the judges do?  
 26 SAMUEL: No the people who make all the light things, those sparks  
 27 things  
 28 INT: OK  
 29 JIMA: Cos they have to see all that happens, cos the people just gonna come  
 30 and when they see its fake they'll just go 'boo' and get their money  
 31 back and go away and they don't want that to happen

Now we get into a discussion and sharing of knowledge about how the stunts are done, the backroom 'know how' and production skills of the programme. The talk now includes all three boys with Samuel increasingly taking a back seat. He clearly has not seen Superstars, the show that explains this whole process. The main point here is the pleasure they clearly take in knowing how the programme tricks the audience and the fact that, while others might be duped by it, they are not. Interestingly Jima claims quite contradictorily (lines 29-31) that the audience will stop being interested if they know it is fake while also claiming that it is knowing how they are tricked that gives him pleasure (British Board of Film Censors, 2001). It is the sharing of this knowledge that draws the group together.

#### Extract 27

1 SAMUEL: ...and the other one was standing up  
 2 JIMA: No but they put dummies up  
 3 SAMUEL: ... and then he went 'whoom' and whacked him liked him like that  
 4 JIMA: No wait wait wait that ain't real the person that got hit that ain't the  
 5 real person  
 6 SAMUEL: Yeah, I know it's a dummy  
 7 JIMA: It's a dummy because remember what Generation X done to Owen  
 8 Hart. They make a dummy of Triple H and then they...

9 SAMUEL: It looks so real you know  
10 JIMA: ...and it's a remote control one and they wait in the locker rooms and  
11 they were controlling it, making it go down to...  
12 INT: Which dummy? [The interviewer has lost concentration]  
13 JIMA: They make...  
14 SAMUEL: It's like robots  
15 INT: Yeah  
16 JIMA: You see the place is huge right and then you've got, there's around five  
17 dummies of each wrestler and um well ...  
18 INT: How do you know all this?  
19 JIMA: Cos they showed it on  
20 SAMUEL: Superstars  
21 JIMA: ...on Superstars when it starts  
22 SAMUEL: They were revealing all the big wrestlers

Samuel pulls the talk back onto territory he knows. This section appears to be much more about sharing memories (confirming a history of shared enjoyment) of past fights and dramas, of reasserting that shared space. It focuses on the use of dummies and the ways in which they are manipulated. Their joint memory of past fights and events is thorough and detailed. The excitement level is high and there is a lot of laughter, essential for the enjoyment both of the programme and the TV talk.

**Extract 28**

1 ESTAVA: Nah the person that I hate most in WWF is Vince McMahon  
2 SAMUEL: Innit  
3 ESTAVA: The owner of the, of the place  
4 SAMUEL: He can fire anybody  
5 ESTAVA: Yeah he can, but Sean Michaels, the commissioner and he can get them  
6 back to play, like he did with Stone Cold Steve Austin.  
7 JIMA: Stone Cold got fired  
8 SAMUEL: Yeah ain't that his son?  
9 JIMA: Shane was the one  
10 SAMUEL: Shane was the one who brought Stone Cold Steve Austin back  
11 ESTAVA: No but that was after and then Sean Michaels...  
12 JIMA: Then after Sean Michaels got fired innit?  
13 ESTAVA: Yeah  
14 JIMA: And he just ..... at them and said, "you can't fire me I'm the  
15 commissioner."  
16 [silence for a few seconds]

This is a very detailed, if brief, exchange again demonstrating the level of knowledge required to participate in TV talk. From the tone of voice they could easily be talking about

old personal friends. The silent pause at the end is one of pleasurable shared memory before they move on again.

**Extract 29**

1 ESTAVA: And I like watching Robot Wars  
2 SAMUEL: I like it when...  
3 INT: Oh is that where they make those little machines, yeah I like that too  
4 ESTAVA: The best one I like is the plastic one.  
5 INT: Do you watch that one Samuel?  
6 SAMUEL: Yeah  
7 ESTAVA: It's the plastic one, he always wins, he's fast, he don't have no armour  
8 but he's good  
9 INT: It's not the same people every week is it?  
10 ESTAVA: Nah, they do that  
11 JIMA: Every week there's some other people  
12 SAMUEL: In wrestling... [he continues to talk under the others through the next  
13 few exchanges]  
14 ESTAVA: Like last week there was the semi finals and now this week it's gonna  
15 be the finals  
16 JIMA: There was one episode of wrestling, Stone Cold Steve Austin, you  
17 know, those big trucks that hold cement in it  
18 SAMUEL: That puts cement in it yeah  
19 JIMA: And this,  
20 SAMUEL: And Stone Cold Steve Austin  
21 JIMA: He'd bought  
22 SAMUEL: He had cars, those big cars that haven't got  
23 JIMA: Ferrari  
24 SAMUEL: That haven't got a sun roof. Stone Cold Steve Austin cos that was Mr  
25 McMahon who fired him, he hates, Stone Cold Steve Austin hates him  
26 so much he took a whole truck of cement and poured all the cement in  
27 his car  
28 JIMA: And he all...  
29 SAMUEL: His 5 million dollar thing car and the thing exploded it  
30 JIMA: Its a Ferrari and if you put it...  
31 INT: You saw that on film?  
32 SAMUEL: Yeah  
33 INT: They filmed it?  
34 ALL: Yeah  
35 SAMUEL: Cos this camera...  
36 JIMA: They are so rich, yeah, they buy that kind of car for him

Estava tries to move the talk onto another programme, Robot Wars (line1) but Samuel and then Jima, bring it back to wrestling (lines 12, 16). Samuel simply starts his own

monologue (line 13) running underneath the other two talking about Robot Wars. This becomes irresistible for Jima (line 16) and soon the two are rolling again with another well known and well loved wrestling story. Here it is a story of richness and affluence that grabs them. They see this as a real story of anger and revenge and lose the worldly wisdom of distance and knowledge. There is a sense in which this ‘behind the scenes’ drama is real even though the wrestling itself is fake (cf British Board of Film Censors, 2001). This is no longer make believe but real destruction: maybe it is inconceivable that anyone would do this simply for show - maybe it goes too far economically?

**Extract 30**

1 INT: Where’s it filmed, in America?  
2 ALL: Yeah America  
3 ESTAVA: But sometimes they come here to the c....  
4 JIMA: C....  
5 ESTAVA: Yeah ca.....  
6 JIMA: They came here on December  
7 INT: And do they go to any other countries?  
8 ESTAVA: No just come from America and England  
9 JIMA: No they go to places like  
10 SAMUEL: Brazil  
11 JIMA: No they don’t go to Brazil, they just go to Germany and stuff, they’ve  
12 been to Brazil once just for X-Pot’s match cos he’s from Brazil. He’s  
13 got the culture of Brazil, of Brazil so they just went there [very softly].  
14 INT: Ok we had better stop

Jima dominates this last section. Both Estava and Samuel try to talk but are interrupted or corrected by Jima. Three weeks later in another session Samuel warned the others not to challenge Jima on wrestling knowledge as he was the expert. It is here that he appears to finally accept this. In this discussion about the roots of TV wrestling the group accepts that its base is in the USA although some of the stars come from elsewhere. For Jima, however, it is not so much that X-Pot “comes from Brazil” but, more importantly, that he has “the culture of Brazil”. Like himself and his friends, although they come from other countries they are not of those countries but they carry the cultures. There is a different sense of belonging and relationship here that I discuss further in the next chapter. Finally it is clear that this talk could have continued indefinitely if I had not brought it to a close.

This talk about wrestling performed several functions for this group of boys. The text itself is multi-layered, demanding different types and amounts of knowledge (about stunts, stars, moves, international connections). They jostled for status by displaying their different knowledges, challenging, confirming and reconfirming what they knew and enjoyed. The physicality of the shows allowed the boys to play fight and have physical contact. Indeed physical contact was more important than verbal language. Each boy had his own moves and they refined these in practice with each other. Sometimes this was competitive, at others it was confirming the group hierarchies and identity. It was participatory, excessive and over dramatic and ultimately confirming. The way the text plays with what is real and what is fantasy allowed the boys to exaggerate, imagine, play with their own realities and their own sense of power. As Barthes (1973) states, it is ultimate theatre and as such it allows its audience to create or re-confirm a shared space of enjoyment, experience, knowledge, memory and play. Through mimicking the performances of the text within the group they are also playing with notions of masculinity in much the same way as Buckingham describes (1993b).

Finally, I would like to talk briefly about the girls' pleasures in watching wrestling. This pleasure was only revealed to me in privacy. Wrestling was not talked about in the group. Its pleasures for the two girls in the group were strictly home based. Both Nyota and Morwen liked to watch wrestling with their fathers. Nyota said she watches "every Friday". It appeared to be a time of intimacy and sharing for them. Morwen's father described the way Morwen enjoyed trying out the wrestlers' moves on him in their living room. She did sometimes watch with her home friends but was very aware that many of her friends did not watch and so chose not to reveal this interest at school. Nyota's interest also seemed to centre on the women wrestlers whom she did not approve of but also appeared to admire. Again this was not a pleasure that she shared with her school friends. This wrestlers' territory was well patrolled it seems, and girls were not to be seen to enjoy what the boys claimed as their own.

### **(b) The news**

In this subsection I will be discussing TV talk about the news. In Chapter 8 I will discuss the news as a feature of the everyday lives and the development of a sense of place and belonging for refugee and migrant children. Here I want to concentrate more on the way the news is embedded in children's lives at home, in their personal and in their social lives. I will look at data collected in different contexts and try to piece together a picture of the role that the news plays in these children's lives and how it frames aspects of their everyday life and talk.

Children almost invariably claim that news is 'boring.' Universally, children say they don't want to watch it; it is something that parents watch. 'Boring' could simply mean that it is not interesting or this statement could be covering over the range of emotions that news does in fact evoke. As we saw in Chapter 3 and again in Chapter 4 news is not simply a matter of information relay but also something that touches personal fears (Buckingham, 1996) and social expectations of citizenship and adulthood (Buckingham, 2000b; Gillespie, 1995).

A mark of its importance was the way newsreaders were considered to be extremely important people with high status. Trevor MacDonald was the most popular newsreader. This was particularly so amongst the black children but also among others. When we were preparing the boys video and choosing the TV characters to symbolize the most important things in their lives they chose Trevor MacDonald to symbolize education. This was before they decided to subvert it and change to Kenny from South Park. When the boys group visited The Museum of the Moving Image Samuel spent a very long time in the booth pretending to be a newsreader. This extract from my field diary tells the story.

### **Extract 31    Field diary extract**

Then I persuade them over to the news reading set and Samuel really gets into this. The others are reluctant to take part and I think it is because they are going to have trouble reading the autocue so they play around in the background. They get a real kick out of watching themselves and when the others are off somewhere else I notice

Samuel going back for more, really concentrating on reading ‘in the style’. They all say Trevor MacDonald is their favourite. Later back home this is what Samuel concentrates on when he tells his father about the outing. He was ‘being Trevor MacDonald’.

The news is often a main arena for conflict between parents and children in the family. Conflicts arising in other areas of life are acted out over who gets to watch what on TV. Since news is something that is adult, usually male, territory it becomes a focus for family negotiations, particularly between fathers and children. It is this that contributes to children describing the news as ‘boring’. In addition to preferring to watch something else they are also vying for power over the viewing choice. News, therefore, is a good area to reject.

However, while saying they didn’t want to watch the news, many of the children did in fact do so. Knowing about the news was important in being knowledgeable and hence included. Jima said he watched in case he was asked about it. He rarely volunteered talk about the news with his peers, as other programmes gave him more ‘street cred’. However, he did regard the news as an important part of his all round education and used it very effectively in the dinner hall chat at school.

**Extract 32**

1 INT: What makes you watch it and what makes you not watch it?  
2 JIMA: Like most of the time because like it’s about murder and stuff.  
3 Someone’s died or something. I might watch it or I might not. If  
4 something like serious is happening I might get asked about it so I just  
5 hear it but...  
6 INT: So you do watch it if you are going to get asked about it?  
7 JIMA: I watch it, I watch it when I feel like it but not most of the time  
8 INT: OK and does your Dad watch it quite often?  
9 JIMA: All of the time.

In this extract Jima is very open about when and why he watches the news. It is highly unlikely that he will be asked about the news in the formal school day but it is very likely that news events will come up in the course of talk amongst his peers and again he feels he needs to be ‘in the know’. He makes a clear separation between tabloid type news which he sees as optional viewing and what he calls serious news (lines 4) which might come up in discussion and about which he should concern himself. This interview was conducted

during the Kosovo war and so this type of major world news event was clearly in the front of his mind. We will see in Chapter 8 how personally children take the international news that they see on their televisions.

On another occasion Jima used his news knowledge to press home an advantage over Samuel as we have seen him do with other types of programmes. This time it was about the Budget.

**Extract 33**

1 INT: What did you watch last night?  
2 SAMUEL: Let me see, let me see, nothing, apart from the, you know those things  
3 that like Tony Blair and all that stuff  
4 INT: You mean the Budget business  
5 SAMUEL: No  
6 JIMA: Yeah, the budget!  
7 SAMUEL: No the Parliament, yeah that  
8 JIMA: The Budget  
9 SAMUEL: I only watched that then I had to go and do my homework,  
10 go to church, come back and watch um nothing  
11 INT: OK

In this extract Jima is very confident. It is more in the tone of his voice that the put down comes (line 6). Samuel starts warily not wanting to admit to watching the news (line 2) and then gets trapped by Jima claiming greater knowledge and a more adult stance. So negotiations of age and worldly wisdom were part of the territory of watching the news. Sometimes it was claimed and sometimes rejected, reflecting the general ambivalence about growing up.

As Buckingham found (2000b) local news stories were often talked about by the girls in particular. They were acknowledged as scary and personally threatening. The girls often shared factual and fantasised news stories and scared each other all over again, often with great pleasure. The social effects on the girls were particularly obvious and worrying. They made a direct relationship between the local news stories and the restrictions placed on their movements in the neighbourhood. These restrictions had been thoroughly internalised. They were more likely to talk to each other on the phone than to go to each



other's houses or if they went to the shop they would never go alone. It was an agreed fact in their lives, in stark contrast to the boys.

**Extract 34**

1    RHAXMA:    Once, yeah, when my aunty came around and my mum was in hospital  
2                    then I heard news and it said, I don't know, about every time little kids  
3                    go out it's like someone eats them.  
4    JUBA:        What?  
5    RHAXMA:    I said on the news and they've found their bones, yucky  
6    JUBA:        Yuck  
7    RHAXMA:    That's why I don't go off by myself  
8    JUBA:        Sometimes I go out at night to buy something from the shop  
9    RHAXMA:    All by yourself?  
10   NYOTA:      Nah I go I go  
11   JUBA:        With Kojo [her older brother]  
12   INT:         With Kojo?  
13   JUBA:        Sometimes I go by myself  
14   RHAXMA:    You shouldn't!  
15   NYOTA:      Sometimes I go  
16   MORWEN:    You don't, you liar! [addressing Juba]  
17   JUBA:        I do  
18   MORWEN:    You shouldn't!

This group often talked about the dangers of going out alone. Here Rhaxma starts off with a topic (lines 1-3) that she knows will put her on shared territory, especially with Morwen. Juba challenges the norm (line 8) in order to get a reaction. It is a ritual they go through. Nyota tries to join in but is ignored (line 10). Later in this conversation Nyota returns to this theme and talks about how when she goes to the shop with her brother he spends the whole time scaring her. In the end on this occasion she ‘thumped him’ and got into trouble at home for it. What is interesting is that this girl, who was very confident and very assertive in school and at home, should be so scared on the street between her home and the local shop, only a block away. In the case of Kings Cross, there are real dangers in the area. But the television stories they watched appeared to add to this vulnerability, especially the local news and even more the local newspaper. The stories they retold were often mixed up, details from one transplanted to another. They often lacked context or reason and it was both the crimes themselves and the way they were reported which

promoted the sense of randomness. This was the sense of threat that the children retained (cf Buckingham, 1996).

The girls' restricted movements had interesting consequences for the research itself. With the boys' group I spent very fruitful time out and about in the local neighbourhood or on outings further afield. They were very confident, more relaxed than in school, and I was struck by the ways in which their TV talk used the environments in which we found ourselves. Making local references and relating what they saw in reality to what they had seen on television was a major feature of the talk and of the ways in which they related to each other and to their geographical locations. In addition there were no parental problems about taking them out at all and no requests about exact return times or need for precise plans.

In contrast the girls' group was tense, needing to know exactly what the plans were before we started. They had clearly not been out with each other much and had to work out how to behave with each other in this new situation. One child was not allowed to come at all and while the other parents were very willing to allow them to come, they needed to know exactly what we would be doing and when we would be back. The conversation amongst the girls was stilted and very few references were made to what was around them and no relationships made between what they saw in reality with what they saw on television.

I am very aware in making such comparisons of the different ages of the groups and that the girls were still at a stage when most of their social contact involved games more than chat. However, the point I want to make here is that the news, and especially local news stories, exacerbated the fears of both parents and the girls themselves and resulted in greater geographical restrictions and therefore different social uses of television that did not apply to the boys.

Here Rhaxma and Nyota are talking again about the news.

**Extract 35**

1 INT: You were talking about the news the other day. Does it scare you or do  
2 you like to watch it and find out what is going on?  
3 RHAXMA: I like to watch it and find out but sometimes it scares me  
4 INT: Yeah what kinds of things scare you?  
5 RHAXMA: It's like when people die it scares me. I don't really like...  
6 NYOTA: I don't like that either  
7 INT: Hm. OK so what do you do then if you are scared?  
8 NYOTA: I don't do nothing  
9 RHAXMA: Like yesterday the lights went out and I was in the bath and I just came  
10 out of the bath cos I was scared  
11 NYOTA: The news, yeah, it's nice, yeah, but I don't like it. I know it's important  
12 yeah, but I don't like it. I don't know why...  
13 INT: What's important about it?  
14 NYOTA: It tells you the news. It could be bad news it could be good news,  
15 whatever  
16 INT: Does it ever tell you about Africa or your country?  
17 NYOTA: Yeah. People die, that's what it tells me  
18 RHAXMA: That's what I hate about news, dying  
19 INT: Dying  
20 RHAXMA: Like the presenter's died, Jill  
21 NYOTA: Yeah

I asked them directly about fear (line 1) because there had been several group conversations about scary news stories. I had also observed several playground games that appeared to be based on these stories. They clearly did not know what to do with their fears. Many of the children I spoke to didn't talk with their parents about what scared them in the news. They talked about the stories themselves and several of the parents said that they tried to talk to them about major events such as the Kosovo war. However, it appeared that this was not about the feelings that news evoked but rather about the facts. Within the group horrific news stories would be repeated with some pleasure and thrill in order to scare each other. Some reassurance seemed to be gained from this. Buckingham (1996, 2000b) talks about the ways in some children take comfort in 'doing something', like raising funds for charity. None of the children here mentioned such organised possibilities and this might be a class factor. However, individual families did send food and clothing and other assistance when possible to family members and friends in their home countries. Nyota in particular found this helpful.

The news stories of the day played an important part in TV talk and in the ways in which children talked about both their locality and their place in it. News was acted out in games, processed in fictional ways in peer talk, and discussed directly both with parents and friends. It framed what was considered adult knowledge and therefore how the children played with expectations of childhood and adulthood. News often promoted, in both children and parents, fears about their personal safety. This restricted their movements and their social relations. These fears, particularly locally based fears, dominated talk about news. For some, politics was seen as something unrelated to everyday life (cf Buckingham 2000b). For others, as we shall see in the next chapter, it related directly to their lives. However, as Bauman (1998) maintains and as I pointed out in Chapter 3, international events were often seen as decontextualised and random.

### **(c ) The Simpsons**

The Simpsons was one of the most frequently mentioned programmes in the upper school, especially amongst the boys. It crops up again and again throughout this thesis and I focus on it here and in Chapter 9 where I discuss how Jima, in particular, related to it. Although much safer territory, the children saw The Simpsons, like South Park, as being both for adult and child audiences. It is an animation and therefore seen as presented for children but the content is often more adult and therefore held an additional allure. Added to this it, like other programmes, had started with later broadcast times and then been repeated at earlier times, making its target audience ambiguous.

The Simpsons revolves around an American nuclear family: father, mother, older son, younger daughter and baby. They live the good suburban life and yet this dream is betrayed. Wells (2002) compares the father figure in The Flintstones with Homer Simpson. Both are portrayals of white blue-collar workers. The difference is that while one remains within an establishment that appears to promote social aspiration, while at the same time confirming the status quo, the other sets out to be a self-conscious critic of this status quo. Homer parodies Fred Flintstone. He is often distant or out of control, more often than not does the wrong thing, but on many occasions he manages to muddle through and do the right thing. He carries much of the emotional charge of the programme. Marge meanwhile

is the sensible and more intelligent one, the one who holds the family together and acts as the community's social conscience. But she too has her failures, as when she develops a gambling habit that threatens to totally undermine the family as a functioning unit. Bart, the son, is the naughty boy and also often the stupid boy. His focus is his friends and his locality. He is more often than not in trouble but this is usually despite himself. His predominant motivation is to please. When he wears his 'genius' tee-shirt the ironic humour is clear. Lisa, on the other hand, is declared a genius but is still the annoying little sister. The baby, Maggie, is the foil over whom many family conflicts are enacted.

While the Simpsons family is, on the surface, dysfunctional, this is as much a channel for humour as for questioning our assumptions about the perfect family. The Simpsons family does function in the way that most families do. There are rows and mistakes but no violence or abuse and there is also affection and caring. They are more appealing than many of their bigoted neighbours and we vary from laughing at them to laughing with them. Jozajtis (2002) describes Homer as an essentially moral man, a good father with human flaws. We feel superior and yet at the same time we sympathise and identify with them. Springfield, the town in which they live, is portrayed in much the same way, as both good and bad. It is a suburban paradise of malls and economic prosperity that is often under threat, both from within and without. The locations are familiar to all children: home, school, local landmarks of shops, playground, street. There are places of danger and of safety.

There are four aspects of the programme which both frame and facilitate TV talk. Firstly its subject matter is the everyday life and events of one family, allowing the children to discuss both the faults and successes of this family and their own. In many respects it is subversive. The bad behaviour, particularly of Homer and Bart, allow the children to play legitimately at bad behaviour. The show is peopled with stereotypical characters (and behaviours) which can be matched by people in the children's own lives. Finally the way it is broadcast facilitates both its ambivalent age appeal and the learning of details of character and plot.

It was the family dynamics and the role of the son, Bart, that were often the centre of the children’s TV talk. The way Homer, the father, behaves or misbehaves is also a source of great pleasure. The relationship between Bart and his father was another focus of their interest. Both Jima and Samuel clearly enjoyed the fact that their fathers watched it and it was something they could do together and share the humour. Estava and Denis, whose father was not around, liked to watch it with their older stepbrother.

However, it was clear that this was seen by the boys as a subversive view of family life, something to be laughed at. The boys’ voiced opinion was that The Simpsons is to show you how families should not be. Samuel confirmed this when he said, “they are a stupid family”. The programme itself concentrates on the familiar everyday things of life but gives them a subversive twist. Both boys recognised the grandfather who is so deaf you can’t communicate with him and Samuel compared him with his own profoundly deaf grandfather who was visiting from Kenya. They were not seen as a family to be emulated. However, the affection with which they held this family and the ways in which they likened it to their own, again displayed an ambivalence. In this sense the children played both with accepted notions of social behaviour and social institutions as well as taking the opportunity to take a new look at their own families. Jima, for example, often described his father in terms of his similarity to Homer.

**Extract 36**

1 INT: Who are you?  
2 JIMA: I’m mostly like ... Bart  
3 INT: Bart. Right and who is your Dad?  
4 JIMA: He’s getting to be exactly like Homer  
5 [laughter]  
6 INT: How?  
7 JIMA: He’s sitting down on the sofa always. Just exactly like Homer. He  
8 believes TV so he, ah I think he’s copying it from him  
9 INT: Practising being like Homer?  
10 JIMA: I think so  
11 INT: Yeah

and on another occasion

**Extract 37**

1 INT: And what does your dad like to watch?  
2 JIMA: I don't know. He likes news and stuff  
3 INT: Hm  
4 JIMA: You know, the opposite side of Homer  
5 INT: The opposite side of Homer  
6 JIMA: He likes cartoons

Before the first extract Jima had established that watching The Simpsons was a social event at his house. In the first extract he begins to explore the ways in which his father is like Homer Simpson (line 7). He often found it easier to talk about his father in relation to television characters and especially to Homer Simpson. In the second extract he accepts that his father has different interests (lines 2, 6) but the picture still remains of his father 'believing' TV like Homer.

Bart's naughtiness was much enjoyed and shared with playground workers who had to be telling the boys off for similar behaviour. Bart became symbolic of how the boys should not behave in relation to them. The subversive nature of The Simpsons allowed it to be used to challenge norms in the playground. As with wrestling, this created a grey area in relation to the no fighting and no bad language or gestures rule. Doing imitations of Homer or Bart's bad behaviour challenged norms and made extra demands on the playground helpers. Here Cathy describes how difficult this could be in relation to swearing and South Park.

**Extract 38**

1 CATHY: They just say did you see The Simpsons last night. Wasn't it really  
2 funny when Bart such and such, cos Bart's naughty. They just  
3 walk around doing imitations of Homer Simpson. But I mean  
4 South Park is the worst, 'cos the older ones try to do the whole section  
5 of South Park, including the swear words, cos you are laughing and  
6 talking with them about it and then they will say it and you have to go,  
7 ' You shouldn't be saying that'

The Simpsons is filled with stereotypical characters that are all easily recognisable: the bully, the naughty boy, the nagging mother, the clown, the bad tempered father, the nosey

neighbours, the annoying sibling. In this extract the subversive stereotype is enjoyed but it has an added twist of the taboo as it enters territories of sexuality. Millhouse is the nerd, the one who wears glasses and is also (at least in one episode) defined as gay.

**Extract 39**

1 JIMA: The next thing is Millhouse and Nelson  
2 SAMUEL: Had a fight and Millhouse won [softly]  
3 ESTAVA: Which is Millhouse?  
4 DENIS: Millhouse is that gay boy  
5 JIMA: [laughter]  
6 SAMUEL: Not the gay boy, the guy with the four eyes  
7 ESTAVA: Oh him  
8 JIMA: Look I'll show you the picture [gets out the magazine]. Look here, it's  
9 in this one. You can get it on this page. I swear it is. See this kid here  
10 SAMUEL: Where is he?  
11 ESTAVA: Yeah, him  
12 JIMA: That homosexual kid  
13 [Laughter]  
14 INT: Which is Millhouse?  
15 SAMUEL: He wears glasses  
16 INT: OK  
17 ESTAVA: Millhouse and what?  
18 JIMA: Millhouse and Nelson, Nelson's the bully  
19 SAMUEL: Look at that, look at that  
20 DENIS: Oh Nelson!  
21 JIMA: There he is, there's a picture of him  
22 DENIS: Yeah, he always  
23 SAMUEL: The bully, he's got two more friends  
24 DENIS: ... than you!

Millhouse has already been established as gay and now they return to this theme in relation to him winning a fight. Samuel knows the scene but only intervenes very softly (line 2) since this is dangerous territory for him. He himself is often seen as the nerd. In fact he tries to turn the attention away from Millhouse's gayness and to the easier fact that he wears glasses (line 6) which Samuel does not. Jima returns it squarely to an issue of sexuality (line 12). Samuel is also getting a little embarrassed discussing this in front of me. Jima is enjoying it. Nelson being 'the bully' (line 18) is clearly important as this turns the stereotypes they have just set up on their head. The gay boy should not be any good at



fighting. This is what they enjoy, setting up a situation and then turning it around into the unexpected; and this is what The Simpsons is so good at doing.

The Simpsons combines both a lightness of touch and subversive humour with the raising of serious issues that directly concern the boys: family life, sexuality, being a naughty boy, negotiating friendships, learning about social institutions. Adults might view this in retrospect, with nostalgia, or in relation to their own children. For the boys the appeal was more immediate and they saw aspects of their lives and their personal options presented in a way that was subversive and funny and therefore possible to talk about.

The issue of repeats and long running programmes is also a major factor in relation to The Simpsons. Repeats did not make it more popular, in fact probably the reverse, but they did mean that a programme was easier to incorporate into TV talk amongst friends. The familiarity allowed a vast repertoire of references and shared jokes, that became multi-layered. The TV stories were told in relation to actual incidents and then the incidents were remembered in relation to the TV stories. The two lives became intertwined in a way I found quite confusing at first, not knowing all the original references. These longer stories became distilled to one liners or simply gestures. The shared space of the original story became the shared space of the group; and the programme became synonymous with the group. It is therefore clear that in order to belong to the group you had to watch the programme and it was this that Samuel so clearly battled with when he was not allowed to watch.

Of all the programmes the boys talked about, The Simpsons was the one that crossed into all the different forms of TV talk. It provided endless story lines to be learned in detail, it provided word plays and jokes. It was possible to act out the scenes and characters without the need for words. It related to everyday scenes that they were familiar with and could use as references and comparisons with their lives. It provided dialogue and possibilities for verbal mimicry. Above all it was funny and therefore adaptable to a range of purposes and situations.

Programmes like The Simpsons and wrestling were chosen favourites that the children used in their everyday social relations. As I have suggested such choices were determined by age and gender although some crossed these divides. Yet while the children were definitely creative in their uses of such programmes, the possibilities open to them were not infinite. Their social context, their peer and family relations and the texts themselves all place boundaries on invention. In fact it is these boundaries and the children's developing understanding of them that is central to TV talk. TV talk allows the children to use programmes both to develop group and individual identities and to negotiate and understand these social contexts and their place in relation to them.

The social forms of TV talk were often inclusive but they also set the boundaries on inclusion. Much of the social negotiation contained within the banter, verbal exchange and sharing was a negotiation about what behaviour and belief was to be allowed within the friendship group. It was also a negotiation with the social inclusions and exclusions of the society in which the children were growing up. The children were constantly setting, learning, negotiating and contesting these boundaries and forming identities in relation to them. The children's differences and similarities were under constant scrutiny and individual children would be included or excluded on the basis of how well they were able to engage in the group TV talk. The news is perhaps more complicated in the sense that it is mostly not chosen viewing but, as a central part of the adult and wider world, it raises complex and contradictory emotions. It presents views of the world that each child has to negotiate according to their own private fears and histories. It is primarily news, therefore, that I focus on in the next chapter in looking at the ways in which the refugee and migrant children and their families used television in the development of a sense of place and belonging.

## CHAPTER 8      GLOBAL LIVING, GLOBAL VIEWING

### Introduction

In the last chapter I argued that children's uses of television are highly diverse and creative but that they are also constrained both by the social contexts in which the children live and by the television programmes themselves. In this chapter and the next I will be looking at how the TV talk described in the previous chapter operates specifically for children who are refugees and migrants. How do they use television in their particular social and personal situations? In what ways are their uses distinct from those of their peers?

I will be looking specifically at the ways in which migrant and refugee children use television both to keep connections beyond the local and to build connections with their immediate host culture. In the last chapter I stated that some of the migrant/refugee children I spoke to were very conscious of the social potential of television to create the 'shared space' needed to facilitate social connections within the host community. In this chapter this expands to also look at the very conscious way these children and families use global television to maintain social connections with their past and to build connections with their countries and cultures of origin. I will also look at some of the conflicts that these processes invoke. These issues have been discussed in general terms in Chapters 1, 2 and 4. Here I discuss them specifically in relation to the children in this study.

I have subdivided this chapter into 5 sections. Firstly I look at the ways in which the families and children used transnational media to maintain diasporic connections. I then look at how these children's uses and attitudes relate to issues raised in debates about the homogenisation of global media mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2. In the third section I look briefly at some of the inevitable generational and cultural conflicts that are acted out through TV talk. I then go on to look at how TV talk can go some way to providing a sense of place/s for these children who are learning to live with multiple cultures. Finally I look specifically at the uses and effects of global news.

I will be arguing that global TV offers migrant and refugee children new opportunities and possibilities of continuity of culture, language and sense of place; but that it also highlights personal and cultural conflicts and differences that the children have to learn to negotiate through the resources available to them – a major one being television. Massey (1992) makes the point that ‘living with diversity’ is nothing new for the majority of people and that it is only a new concern for the privileged of the west. Celebration of, or concern about such complexities should, therefore, be seen in this context. However, such negotiations are increasingly a necessity for everyone and institutions and people in our society who previously have not taken account of them need increasingly to do so.

In the next chapter I will take two detailed case studies of individual children and their friends and examine how the elements outlined here played out in their lives at that time.

#### **(i) Diaspora and global media**

During the course of my fieldwork I attended several meetings of parents’ groups that the school had started in order to promote more parental involvement. The first was open to all parents and the idea was to work on making displays and teaching aids for use in the classroom and for a special parents display board. The second was only for Turkish speaking parents as they had been identified as an expanding group whose children were having particular difficulties in the school. In both groups much of the talk amongst the almost exclusively female groups was about the isolation that they felt living here. This was both in terms of loss of family and close community but also of isolation within the family.

Much of this was also to do with domestic politics; the mothers’ role as home keepers and their struggles to be able to attend the limited English classes available to them. In this context it was very important for many of these women to be able to relax with television that was familiar, both in terms of language and content. This was a widely expressed feeling among parents from several different countries. Safiyah, a Palestinian mother, who had been here many years, expresses the change that satellite television brought to her life.

Extract 40

1     SAFIYA:     It’s a window open to all doors, the satellite. I need something to  
2                    feel interest. You know, housewife always at home, washing,  
3                    cooking, looking after children, she needs something for herself,  
4                    yeah. So I feel I find myself when I sit down and watch satellite.

Safiyah is remembering how getting satellite television changed her life. It made her feel less lonely and more connected. Having satellite access to programmes in her language about her culture acted as some kind of substitute for the family and community she missed back home. This is primarily a need for familiarity of content and references; but it is also a matter of language.

During a discussion in one of the parents’ meetings Safiyah was talking to a Pakistani mother about satellite TV. She said that it made her feel ‘part of something’. The other woman said that they watched a lot of Pakistani TV and Indian films at home. She said that her children only wanted to watch English TV and she accepted that that was how it would be, since they were born here. However, she needed ‘something else’. Both women said that their homes were here now because their children were here and would build their futures here but that it was complicated and difficult for their children. Their role as mother was to build a connection between the past and the future. Gillespie (1995) and Siew-Peng (2001) among others have discussed the ways in which media assist parents in doing this. My observations and interviews confirmed that diasporic and transnational television play an important part in this process and that families use it very consciously both for personal and for cultural reasons, in order to keep connected and to retain continuities.

At different times some of the families stopped receiving their own language satellite and cable programmes because of the cost. Both Nyota’s parents (Lingala and French speaking) and Rhaxma’s mother (Somali, Italian and Arabic speaking) spoke about how they missed these programmes and felt more cut off without them. They were not specific about what they were cut off from, since they were aware that the different stations were not in their

cases broadcast from their home countries (The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia) but clearly this increased their feelings of isolation and their separation from what was familiar. As soon as they were financially able to restore cable they did so.

The Turkish/Kurdish women also talked about how they became isolated from their children as they grew up and grew away from the home culture. As their children gradually preferred to speak English rather than Turkish the mothers (who often spoke very little English) became separated from them. The importance for them of Turkish language TV was both for their own entertainment and ease of understanding but also as an attempt to keep their children within the language and culture that would prevent them losing contact in the present and future. In the group interview with them and with the Turkish/Kurdish children it was clear that TV played a strongly social and cultural role in their lives, although I could not grasp how they reconciled their Kurdish nationalism with their love of Turkish TV.

I asked them what television they watched. Through the interpreter the reply stressed the cultural and social aspects. One of the women didn't have Turkish TV but that was because the reception was bad so she went to friends' homes to watch. It was the social act of watching together or of being able to talk about it together later that both parents and children stressed. Only one woman said she would prefer to only have English TV because that that would improve her English language but they had Turkish channels because her husband and her children (who were still young) watched them.

When Leyla and Selve first came to the school their mother did not want to have Turkish TV as she felt they were now living here in this society. Turkey had offered them very little and they were making a new start. However, after a year they were regularly watching Turkish TV, albeit at a friend's house. Their mother was thinking of getting Turkish TV, saying that she was afraid they would forget their Turkish. She was still having great problems learning English and feeling increasingly isolated both within the host society but also at home when her children watched English TV. The children were using Turkish TV as a way of socialising with other members of the Turkish/Kurdish community here. They also wanted to keep up to date with news events back home. They had found a new community but it was

not an English speaking one. They never socialised with non-Turkish families or children outside school, yet they did not feel part of Turkey. As in the case of the respondents quoted by Aksoy and Robins (2000), their feelings towards Turkish television were ambivalent. This shift of position in relation to TV therefore does not represent a simple rejection of assimilation but a coming to terms with living with diversity both locally and with a changing 'back home'.

Turkish TV fulfilled several complementary roles: language teaching and continuity, combating cultural isolation, creating social connections in the new place among the diasporic community, confirming feelings of separation and change, being away and not part of changes happening 'at home'. The question remains as to how and whether this limits the possibilities of creating 'shared spaces' and affects their ability to communicate with their non-Turkish peers or whether Turkish TV, in all its different forms, is facilitating the formation of new diasporic Turkish identities (cf Aksoy and Robins 2000).

For example Gul was a Turkish/Kurdish child who watched a lot of Turkish TV and to whose home Leyla and Selve went to watch Turkish TV. Her mother said that Turkish TV was all she watched. Gul was a very sociable child and on the whole managed well in the playground. During one playtime I was struck by her active inclusion in a game whose content she clearly did not understand, although she did understand the format. This was a game organised by Marie, a French/English child in her class. There were two pairs of children. Each pair had to act out a TV programme or film for the other to guess. Although Gul pretended to participate she was in fact simply mimicking what her partner, Marie, was doing and not contributing anything of her own to the game. She was adept at bluffing but her lack of mainstream English/American media references did exclude her. She was clearly nervous of being 'discovered' and embarrassed that I was observing. In interesting contrast Marie was able and confident enough to bring in her own cultural references in the form of Asterix to beat the competition: she was more fluent at the mainstream and hence had a firmer grasp on the 'shared space'.

There are two things operating here. Firstly, Gul could sustain the game because the genres were familiar to her, since she had met them on Turkish TV. However, her participation was limited as she did not know the English references and so could not mix and switch in the way that Marie could, and in a way that would have made her differences more acceptable. Secondly, in many games of this nature there appeared to be a hierarchy of ‘allowed’ difference. In this case French references were more acceptable than Turkish. Frequently international hierarchies were acknowledged and deferred to in the children’s games.

Clearly different communities use different mixes of media to maintain cultural continuities. There is a well-documented tradition of Indian and Pakistani communities’ use of films on video. Many of the Bengali children I spoke to also referred to this but many complained that they themselves didn’t understand them as they spoke Sylheti and not Hindi, although they did agree that they could get the main idea. Many were resistant to watching them and said they were boring. They only watched out of a sense of family duty. However there was also clear enjoyment in the sense of family and community that watching together promoted.

Both the Bengali and Turkish speaking children I spoke to also talked about sending and receiving home videos. Although this did not seem to be as wide spread as I had expected it still performed an important function. The Somali families also sometimes sent videos of weddings or important family events. Interestingly however it was only after long questioning that these were mentioned by anyone. They did not consider them as part of their media lives as such but more as letters or photographs.

The video the Dirgen family had had made to mark their son’s circumcision was a wonderful piece linking their favourite places and images in their old and new homes. Mountains and waterfalls were intercut with shots of Trafalgar Square and their favourite park in Wood Green. Highly repetitive and stylised, it tried to make a connection between the past and the present. Nostalgia for old reference points mixed with places that were gathering meaning in their new lives. Their son, entering manhood, was placed visually and metaphorically in the centre of the images. The daughters did not feature at all. The media here facilitated the



imaginative leaps of changed community and place across distance but still kept many continuities and old differences (Appadurai, 1996; Brah 1996; Sreberny 2000).

Use of the internet in this area was not yet widespread. Indeed only one interviewee, a Bengali language support teacher, spoke about using it and then only after the main interview was over. After the tape was turned off we continued to chat and she talked about how “wonderful” e-mail is and that she used it a lot to keep in touch. She had one brother in Japan, who had two sons studying in the USA. There were nine siblings in total and two of her sisters and one brother in Bangladesh had e-mail; they let everyone know that they would be at one of the houses, so they could all chat and exchange news.

This kind of connection is clearly absolutely suited for the many families today who are so spread out in different parts of the world, and is bound to become much more part of diasporic family life. There were two families in the study who did mention that they would soon be doing this. One I labelled in my mind as the 'world citizens', the Solanos, who had family in Portugal, Angola, Germany, the USA as well as in the UK and were very economically aspiring. The second was Juba's family who were trying to set up a business between here and their home country of Ghana but were being restricted by the limited access to such technology in their home country. This form of keeping in contact complements the broader uses of TV in this arena but access inevitably reflects international economic power relations.

Diasporic media usage presents a complex picture of emotions and connections. Television and other media are used consciously both to sustain old connections and build new ones but also to come to terms with separations and to build new forms of connection and identity. It is not possible to say that diasporic media only maintain the old or hinder assimilation into the host. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Aksoy and Robins (2000) make the point that as the Turkish media market has changed so have the possibilities of Turkish identity formations abroad evolved. New forms of belonging and diversity are possible. However, they also make the point that in watching different channels and different programmes there is often an

ambivalence and a consciousness of a choice being made that non-migrant children and adults do not experience in the same way.

## **(ii) Global television**

In this section I focus on global television and on those popular media products that are broadcast on many different channels and which were the centre of much childrens' TV talk. They are, in the main, American productions and the centre of concern about cultural homogenisation as discussed in Chapters 1 and 4.

For the children I spoke to it was the most natural thing in the world that the same programmes would be broadcast in different countries or in different languages on different channels. Estava and Denis took it totally for granted that the TV they knew as small children in Portugal would, in large part, be the same as that which they met when they came here. They talked about their joy when arriving here that WWF was there for them to watch and it made them feel instantly at home. When I spoke to Jima about this he totally misunderstood my question. His assumption was that I thought the sameness of the programmes might make it boring, not that this might be culturally inappropriate. He took it for granted that there was a global culture that all children tapped into and that there were the same programmes all over the world. In fact he saw it as positive and reassuring. The question here was how this might affect how he saw 'difference' locally and globally.

Muraya, a Somali mother, was quite defensive when I spoke to her about television in Somalia and chose to stress that they have 'everything'. She said there are plays and films in Somali but then said that a large part of the programming is in Arabic. This did not seem to be a contradiction for her. Mr Kando was very similar when talking about TV in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and programming in Lingala or French. He did qualify this however by saying that the news was in Lingala because the Government wanted more people to receive the government message. Clearly there are the obvious financial considerations here but what both people implied was that since there were programmes dubbed into their languages that made them appropriate and acceptable.

Cartoons, the most popular genre among the children, were all dubbed from English/American into Arabic or in the Kandos' case into French. So the children were all familiar with The Simpsons, for example, from their countries of origin. Sesame Street was the other programme cited which, of course, is redesigned in part for different language audiences but in which the main cultural assumptions remain intact. The complexities of Sesame Street and the culturally imperialist assumptions of Children's Television Workshop who produce it are clearly discussed by Hendershot (1998). Muraya saw these as an easy point of connection for her children coming here, both socially, as something they could talk to other children about, but also as a point of familiarity and connection in new and foreign environments. She even extended this to say that for many from Somalia they had seen these programmes in Arabic in Somalia and then as refugees in Swahili in Kenya and then when they moved here or to any other third country again in the third language. She did not see this as a point of cultural confusion or contradiction but as a helpful point of continuity. She saw no problem with this even as a highly religious Islamic woman who is also very actively promoting Somali culture and language in Saturday schools in the area.

Yet when I spoke to teachers or other non-migrant adults there was an amazement at the idea that The Simpsons may have followed a child through their childhood in different countries and could form a continuity of experience that they could draw on. This demonstrated a lack of awareness of the resources children use and that are available in migration. But it also held the residues of cultural assumptions about what is 'appropriate' for children from 'other' cultures. What implications does this have for how schools approach cultural diversity? Does the school itself need to take on board that much of the secondhand experience of the children will touch and be similar, that their view of the world is not only one of difference but also of sameness? The question that arises here again is whether sameness of form means sameness of use and reception.

This dynamic is reflected in the mothers' love of Sunset Beach. Some of the children had mentioned that their mothers watched this American soap. On the whole they themselves despised it although Rhaxma was still sorting out the accepted line on this. They often had to interpret it for their mothers and this produced a level of resentment. Many, if not most, of

the mothers of the families in my study watched it sometimes in their home language, sometimes in English and sometimes in both. It was universally available it seemed. The intensity of their commitment to the programme was great. Many would video it if they were going out or indeed wouldn't go out because of it. It is not a mainstream or popular programme in this country and broadcast mainly in the mornings. Yet here it was able to touch Turkish/Kurdish illiterate mothers, highly educated mothers from Portugal and The Democratic Republic of the Congo, sophisticated travellers from Ghana, crossing religion, education, race and experience.

In an interview with Yildiz Dirgen I asked her, through an interpreter, to tell me what she enjoyed watching on TV. She became quite animated about a particular programme which turned out to be Sunset Beach although she could not remember the name at that time. The interpreter asked her why she liked it so much. She said that it was because it was about family life. She watched it in English and she tried to understand it from the movements. Sometimes she asked the children to explain it to her. When she was asked if it was like her family life she laughed loudly and became quite agitated and almost annoyed. She asked how it could possibly be like her life – “the names, the ages, everything is different”. And yet it was clearly extremely important to her.

This echoes the research, mentioned in Chapter 3, on the emotional realism of soaps (Ang, 1985; Miller, 1992). In the same way there appears here to be a powerful emotional connection between Yildiz and the family and relationship dramas that Sunset Beach depicts. Yet, even as we say that the same programme is experienced differently by different viewers according to their cultural background and context, the problem of what cultural forms and identities are allowed public space or narration remains. I am reminded of Rhaxma, who, while making enormous investments in knowing the accepted popular culture, recognised that she couldn't talk about aspects of her life at school because the others would not be interested; and of the Bengali/British children saying that they didn't talk about Hindi films in school or about the religious videos that they watched at home. These children enjoyed and shared the cultural forms that were accepted by their host culture but could not bring other forms into the shared space. Differences of narrative form, cultural slant, religious

emphasis rarely enter this space. So ‘otherness ‘ of cultural form becomes harder to express and, to the host culture’s eyes, becomes invisible.

### **(iii) Family conflict and negotiation**

In this section I concentrate on transnational and diasporic television uses within the family both for entertainment and ‘family’ time and specifically for language acquisition and maintenance. As I mentioned above, there were lots of instances of children talking about family time together watching programmes in their language of origin with their parents. The children and parents described both feelings of togetherness and sharing but also, very often, of obligation and conflict. But above all there was a strong sense that this formed an integral part of family life and routine. It was also private time rarely talked about with their peers at school.

Safiya's daughter Fatima, for example, could be a loner in the class, moving from the fringes of one group to the fringes of another group. She described watching Arabic TV in the same way that her mother Safiya did, as a time of togetherness and connection. It was almost as if this was a time when they could close the door on the immediate world and travel to another that kept them close to each other. Fatima said that she didn't watch much TV at home. She did her homework and waited till her brother and sister and mother were ready, then they watched Arabic films together.

The Turkish women's group said that their children's favourite programme was a Turkish comedy they all watched together and talked about a lot. Interestingly this programme was never mentioned in my discussions with the children nor did their peers mention that they had talked about it at all. The mothers themselves also rapidly moved on to a discussion of the conflicts that arose from their children watching British TV and especially from them watching soaps. In this extract the questions I ask are translated by the interpreter and then the women reply and again are translated.

**Extract 41**

1 INT: Are there any programmes that they think their children watch because  
2 their friends at school watch them?  
3 [There is a lot of talk about this]  
4 AYSE: A Turkish comedian (a bit like Mr Bean) Kemal Sunal  
5 GULAY: Neighbours every day, EastEnders. Children talk with their friends about  
6 them.  
7 INT: Are there programmes that you don't want them to watch but they do cos  
8 they talk with their friends about them?  
9 GULAY: Sex films, scary films, horror films. I say to my daughter if there is any  
10 sex that it is shameful to watch but she says "No, I want to watch it".

And later in same interview

**Extract 42**

1 AYSE: For example about 2 or 3 years ago I said to my son that I would smack  
2 him and he said that if I did that he would call the police and they would  
3 take him away. "You can't smack me in this country".  
4 GULAY: My daughter does the same thing. I say I will smack you now and she  
5 goes to the telephone and says "I'm ringing"!  
6 INT: So do they behave differently to their children because of this?  
7 ALL: Yes  
8 AYSE: To be able to give the children our idea of family we sometimes smack.  
9 This is not only with smacking.  
10 INT: Are there things that happen in the soaps that show different ways of  
11 doing things and do the children talk with them about this?  
12 AYSEL: Yes, the soaps affect the children's behaviour or requests. For example  
13 the child (in the soap) takes his bike and rides on the road but I have to  
14 say no because it is dangerous. They say, "look, other mums let their  
15 children do things or other mums buy their children things".  
16 INT: This happens in English families too.  
17 AYSEL: The children think that all other Mums do these things.  
18 AYSE: The children talk about these things together.

The women here are unanimous about their children's favourite programme (line 4 in the first extract) and interestingly it never occurs to them that they would only talk to Turkish children about this and what might mean socially. The implication in the next line when soaps are mentioned is still that it is with their Turkish peers that this is talked about. They don't mention the influences of their peers here in relation to the soaps but only of the soaps themselves. As in other areas of the research it is clear here that much of the TV talk with

peers is private or at least not seen or acknowledged by their parents. In line 9 Gulay opens the door for the discussion about their children's defiance towards their mothers. The implication in line 2 of the second extract when Ayse says her son invokes the police against her is that this indeed goes further than television. However, they still blame television for initiating or opening these arguments. The absolute agreement about how this changes the way they behave with their children (line 7) was expressed with great consternation and anger. They were genuinely unable to see a way around this and felt it as a personal but also cultural attack on them and their sense of family. This could be a strong motivation for them to encourage their children to stay with watching only Turkish TV. Not only would it continue the language link with them but they would feel more in control of the social implications. When I raised the point that other non migrant parents experience the same challenges from their children (line 16), they were surprised and unbelieving. What is not part of this discussion is whether the more commercial Turkish channels provoke the same family conflicts (cf Aksoy and Robins, 2000).

TV thus represents another area of isolation for the mothers. Not only do they fear the loss of a language through which to communicate fully with their children but they lose confidence and power in their parenting role and don't understand the power of the influences on their children. The school often complained about the way some of these mothers apparently allowed their children to do what they wanted and did not discipline them at home. The children themselves could not have felt very secure caught in the middle of this.

However, one or two parents were more relaxed, saying that their children's different expectations were natural and that since the children were born here their orientation would be different. They accepted that adjustments were inevitable. But in other families it became a source of great sorrow and anguish. These were often families where the mother was already fairly isolated, not speaking fluent English and not working.

But even in the families that understood the conflicts their children were experiencing, there was a palpable level of fear. Samuel's family was a particular case in point. The father had recently converted to become a Jehovah's Witness as a reaction to what he was meeting in

this country. Although this case is rather extreme it is not untypical in its general attitudes. After each visit to the family I left with an overwhelming sense of the enemy they felt outside. The family appeared to feel under siege. They had come to the UK with great expectations and were genuinely horrified at many of the things they had found. They lived in a tough part of a tough city. The violence they witnessed was intensified by the violence they saw on TV. The level of disrespect of elders they also saw as being encouraged on TV. They worried about how they could protect their children beyond the family home and as a result wished for a form of totalitarian government they had left behind in Kenya.

**Extract 43**

1     MICHAEL:    He picks it up from other people. Sometimes he might be even watching  
2                   the telly. You tell him, “Don’t watch that programme. I don’t want you to  
3                   watch it”. Now immediately you make a corner. There is something  
4                   called a remote control and he switches it off when he hears the door  
5                   opening so what do you do? He turns it on and off so you might think  
6                   that you are bringing your children in a good way and when they go  
7                   outside there there are children who are watching even more violence  
8                   than your children. So how are we going to help it if others are not  
9                   willing to help? How are you going to help because it does be everyone  
10                  has to do it. You can’t do it alone because the child is not for yourself.  
11                  The child is for society.

And later:

**Extract 44**

1     INT:            Well I guess the other choice is just not to have it?  
2     MICHAEL:    How will you know the news?  
3     INT:            Well yeah then you get into...  
4     MARION:    Yeah, you are right. The other choice is not to have it. I do agree with  
5                   you there. I didn't know before I saw programmes of that nature. When I  
6                   first came to this country I thought, “Oh how nice, having a TV is a way  
7                   of having entertainment”. And also you realise when you take it from  
8                   your kids once you’ve introduced it you also have that feeling of, you  
9                   know that you are doing a disservice. You know everybody has got it, are  
10                  talking about it. It would make them want to know more and it’s even  
11                  worse if they go to the neighbour to watch and you don't know what they  
12                  are watching. So that way you find you are compelled because of that  
13                  parental nature towards your kid. You don't want it to but you know the  
14                  main thing I should point it out. It is really the Government themselves



15 that can make sure if they want a better society and claim that they want  
16 to clear up violence on the streets so that we can walk safely and so on

In the first extract Samuel's father, is talking about the interplay between watching TV and the children's own TV talk. He is also talking about the dangers of living in a city and the loss of community and the feeling that your child is known and safe within the community. His sense of being alone is palpable. Again this loneliness is focused on the television that is portraying a world totally foreign and frightening to him. He has sought out a community in the Jehovah's Witnesses who, he feels, will help him protect his children. He has felt the need to do this while still wishing that the Government would protect them. In the second section his wife, Marion, talks about the need to come to grips with what is around their children while trying to keep them in the home and protect them. She prefers to call on Government protection. For both the feelings of fear and isolation are focussed on television and its possible influences.

In much the same way that crime reporting is seen to have encouraged a disproportionate fear among women and old people of walking the streets, so television appears here to have exacerbated fears about the host society (Gerbner and Gross, 1980). For parents, the fears of losing your child in a society and culture foreign to you are played out through the same technology that can bring you closer to your home and can also facilitate the social success of your child. The complex emotions surrounding these conflicts are what Samuel's family is grappling with here.

Language and TV was also an issue of negotiation for many families: who watched what, in which language, and which TV would be on, for what programme. Unlike Leyla's family most families had at least two televisions to enable the different needs of the family members to be met. The Kandos would often have French TV on in the living room for the parents while the children had their TVs, usually on English programmes, in their bedrooms (cf Hargreaves, 1997). Mrs Kando was saddened by her children not being able to speak French and worried about what would happen if they were ever able to return to their country. Her older children had been able to speak French when they came to this country but had rejected it as the language of the country they had left in very painful circumstances. The younger

children had only spoken Lingala, the home language. For them to maintain the French connection it would have meant acquiring both French and English. Their language situation was therefore complicated. The main language for the children had become English while for the parents it was French, while Lingala was now hardly spoken at all. The parents saw no way to remedy this without putting more strain on an already difficult situation. They encouraged their children to watch French TV with them but never forced it. They prioritised keeping them informed about their country (The Democratic Republic of the Congo) and keeping a connection that way.

On the whole for the parents, maintaining the language included maintaining the culture. So in the same breath as they spoke about wanting their children to learn their language it was mainly about keeping a knowledge and emotional connection with the country of origin. For the children it felt much more that they felt it was necessary to learn the language of their parents but since they were now based here and their futures were here there was less interest in keeping in touch with the cultural base from which their parents came. This could clearly become a point of conflict within families. Estava and Denis's mother had gone to some lengths and cost to arrange for them to attend regular Portuguese classes. During the fieldwork she discovered that they had not been attending. She was distraught not only because of the deception but also because she felt they were rejecting the possibility of returning to Portugal in the future.

Every child and family made their own arrangements and accommodations with regards to language and television but all used television in this area in some way. However, this was rarely talked about at school. Mia and Samiya, although good friends, had never talked with each other about this. Their different standpoints and situations are interesting. Mia is Chinese and joined her parents in this country after they had been here several years without her. Samiya is Somali but has lived for most of her life in France with her father. She had recently come here to join her mother who had previously been living in Italy.

**Extract 45**

1 INT: OK. How do you find out what's happening in the country?  
2 MIA: I don't want to know  
3 INT: What about your parents?  
4 MIA: They just ask them or sometimes write letters  
5 INT: They don't have international news?  
6 MIA: Yeah, my parents watch the Chinese channel and record it. It comes out  
7 at 2 o'clock at the night and they record it  
8 INT: Right so they record it and then watch during the day  
9 MIA: Yeah  
10 INT: And do you ever watch that with them?  
11 MIA: I used to but now there aren't any good programmes  
12 INT: OK. Would they like you to?  
13 MIA: Yeah  
14 INT: Why would they like you to?  
15 MIA: Because I'm starting to get stuck on Mandarin. If someone said  
16 something to me I know what it means in English but I don't know what  
17 it means in Chinese. I know what it means but I just can't explain it.  
18 INT: So they would like you to keep the language?  
19 MIA: Yeah. Why do you think your Mum watches Italian?  
20 SAMIYA: Because she understands Italian  
21 INT: Is that the language she speaks best?  
22 SAMIYA: Yeah  
23 INT: Or is it Somali?  
24 SAMIYA: I don't know because I don't understand. But I know she doesn't speak  
25 proper, proper French  
26 INT: So she feels more comfortable watching the Italian channel. Does she  
27 want you to watch it?  
28 SAMIYA: No. She doesn't force me to watch anything.  
29 INT: Mia do you go to Saturday school?  
30 MIA: Yes Sunday school to learn Mandarin  
31 INT: Is that a good way of keeping in touch with your language and country?  
32 MIA: Yeah

Here Mia clearly rejects any connection beyond language with her country of origin, despite her parents wishes (line 2, 11). There is no sense here of her enjoying watching with her parents (line 11). However she does acknowledge her linguistic connection and goes to language school (line 30) and from the way she speaks, there is an acknowledgement of a need to be fluent in both languages (line 15). Like many in her situation this is the compromise that she has come to. For Samiya, on the other hand, the situation is very different. She does not share Somali with her mother and her own main language is not spoken fluently by her mother either. Their point of meeting is English which they are both

learning. At home they agree to watch different channels. Her mother enjoys Italian while Samiya herself actually prefers to watch English TV so she can share this with her friends.

All the children I spoke to experienced similar conflicts to a greater or lesser degree. These conflicts taken alone could support a view that these children are being forced to live a kind of schizophrenic existence between conflicting cultures. However, taking the whole picture, especially those routes of continuity and, in the next section, the ways in which the media allow discussions of place and belonging we see a far more complex picture. This is one in which children to some extent are using the media to develop ways of living with multiple cultures and negotiating different cultural spaces within what is available. Here we have a profound sense of the children, in Sreberny's (2000) words, 'looking around' and drawing on what is available in order to build identities that will draw on the multiple worlds available to them albeit in ways which their parents find more difficult. This is a similar picture to that drawn by Hargreaves and Mahjoub (1997) and Aksoy and Robins (2000). To what extent this amounts to children constructing 'new ethnicities' – and the broader implications these might have – remains a more complex issue, however.

#### **(iv) A sense of place**

A sense of place is about an intimate and personal sense of belonging. These children sought to work out a way of belonging to different places or cultures in different ways. They built geographies of social relations and stretched local boundaries (Massey, 1992). A sense of place relates to where people feel they live and this is no longer singular. It develops from how they negotiate a sense of belonging to different places in different ways. In this section I will be looking at how TV talk operates in developing or defining this 'sense of place'. Morley describes it as “how the physical and symbolic networks become entwined around each other” (2000: 176).

Throughout the fieldwork there were discussions in different forms about nationality, about where home is. This was sometimes played out through discussions and arguments about what national sports teams people supported and why. During international events this

became intense and everybody was required to make their choices. Watching sports on TV was a major preoccupation for the boys, and the girls often mentioned watching with their fathers. During the pilot study the Year 6 class was doing a project on the World Cup which gave me an ideal opportunity to talk to them about loyalties and national connections.

In one of the dinner time discussions Dave, a white Londoner, was talking about going to a local Arsenal match. In this class there was an interesting racial divide not found in other classes. Many of the Black children claimed a loyalty to Manchester United over Arsenal, the local team. They actively played this 'other' choice as a point of unity against the rest of the class. This was not because one team had more black players than the other but because it was a different choice that marked out a separate identity from the other children. However, some football discussion was allowed across this divide. Dave's football opener was taken up by Jima and Samuel, sitting at his table, but shifted to a discussion about who the best goalie selection for the England team would be. Both Samuel and Jima were clearly referring to the team with the word 'we', as supporters. In this instance it was allowed for them to support the same team as Dave. Samuel suggested a Brazilian goalie as being the best choice. Jima replied witheringly that the Brazilian goalie was irrelevant because they were talking about the best one “we have”.

Very careful negotiations were going on between loyalties expected at home and the different ones expected at school and this seemed to symbolize the ways in which these children lived between and in two or more places and negotiated these different loyalties. In this instance Jima and Samuel were claiming ownership of the England team but they had other loyalties as well. Racially they aligned with Manchester United. Internationally they supported an African team even if it wasn't of their country of origin.

Most of the boys and many of the girls supported two or three teams. So when matches were scheduled at the same time they were often put in the position of having to choose which they would watch and how they are going to negotiate this at home. I asked several children who they were supporting. Sherif, for example, who was Egyptian, said he was supporting South Africa because he was African (he was pushing the region a little far here), Saudi

Arabia because they are Muslim and Holland because he thought they would win. Most of the children in the class were making similar decisions based on family, religion, peer friendships and national loyalties, as well as the wish to win. The ways in which the word 'we' was used in all this varied.

In many cases the children are trying to assert themselves in the host culture and to build their future in a world often alien to that of their parents. To an extent greater than for non-migrant children, they had to rely on resources outside the family. The need to be active in the host culture could be taken too far and resulted in various types of rejection of their home language and culture. This was often acted out through television choices as we have seen. The parents often felt this is as a result of the influence of the host culture rather than an attempt on the part of the children to live with both worlds. As I have argued elsewhere TV talk is a forum in which some of these different 'belongings' are acted out by children.

Rhaxma was an interesting case. In one interview she said that she couldn't talk about many aspects of her home life with her friends at school. She recognised the separations and the points at which her friends would cease to understand. Her mother was concerned that her friends would talk about things that she did not understand and that she did not wish her to be part of. She claimed that Rhaxma only watched cartoons at home on television. Rhaxma, however, was negotiating in different ways. In my discussion with Nyota about her poster and her inclusion of music Rhaxma joined in the discussion and I was struck by her insistent claims at inclusion through the words 'everyone' and then 'we' (lines 4, 8).

**Extract 46**

- 1
- NYOTA:
- Yeah, now here, here you are, What I did yeah is about music yeah put all
- 2
- 
- the music I like yeah. I never put what I don't like.
- 3
- INT:
- How do you know about these?
- 4
- RHAXMA:
- Everyone knows about them.
- 5
- NYOTA:
- No I tell you how. Bewitched yeah... Sinead ...I have her CD yeah in my
- 6
- 
- house. Ricky Martin I know all his songs
- 7
- INT:
- But how do you know them?
- 8
- RHAXMA:
- Cos we watch it
- 9
- INT:
- Where do you watch it Rhaxma?
- 10
- NYOTA:
- MTV

11 RHAXMA: And all the kids programmes about  
12 NYOTA: VH1, SMTV Live, Live and Kicking  
13 RHAXMA: Pepsi Chart Show, Top of the Pops

In line 10 Nyota tries to find a separation from Rhaxma who is eager to include herself in this discussion. She does this by immediately mentioning MTV which she knows Rhaxma does not have. Rhaxma recovers and brings in the other programmes that are music based (lines 11 and 13) and Nyota allows this. So Rhaxma as I have said elsewhere works at watching television for inclusion. Sometimes it breaks down and she is 'discovered" but she is always willing to try again. Piecing together her picture, which we will be doing in the next chapter, we will see the vast range of complex negotiations, judgements and knowledges about what is accepted, appropriate and the norm in the different social situations of her everyday life.

When parents talked about the ways in which they encouraged children to watch programmes connected to their countries of origin it was partly the language and the facts they wanted them to gather. But it was also a sense of place that they wished them to acquire through the images and the words. This was far more subtle. When Safiya said, “I feel I stay with my home”, when she watches news about Palestine it is not the news itself that is central but the sense of familiarity that she enjoys (Siew-Peng, 2001). She would like her children also to have this level of belonging. The family visits to Arabic countries for their holidays were the main way that she sought to achieve this but these needed to be supported by more frequent visual references.

For Leyla and Selve watching images of London on Turkish TV was more complicated because they had come to associate the ‘other’ place with Turkish television. It was as if expectation had been swapped and they could not locate themselves any more.

**Extract 47**

1 INT: Do you watch the Turkish news?  
2 SELVE: No  
3 INT: Why not?  
4 SELVE: It’s boring  
5 INT: Do you watch English news?  
6 SELVE: Not boring

7 INT: So why is one boring and not the other?  
8 SELVE: I don't know. In Turkish Television they talk too much in the news. I like  
9 it a little bit 'cos when that man yeah came to London it showed it on  
10 Turkish TV and he comes to London at night  
11 INT: That was on last night?  
12 SELVE: Yeah

From the tone of voice, body language and the way in which they returned to this news item several times, they seemed to find it confusing to see Turkish and English visual references interlinked. It was clearly a very strange experience for them to see the place where they now lived depicted visually on the Turkish channel and in a language that they associated with the other place and people. They were still very naïve in media terms and I had to explain to them how the tape recorder worked. They were extremely excited each time when they could listen to their voices after the interviews. Similarly they had not yet come to terms with the technical possibilities of video, and with the way these different images related to them and their lives. This mixing of images was central, as we saw above, in the video made to mark Selve's brother's circumcision.

In the news broadcasts of disasters or conflicts, these images become disturbed. The familiar ones are replaced with ones that disturb the equilibrium of today but also at a profound level the equilibriums of the past. Thus Leyla, as we shall see in the section below about television news, began to question her good memories of when she lived in Turkey when images of the capture of Ocalan and closely after this those of the earthquake were shown on her screens.

On my outings with the children they often noted sights or buildings and likened them to ones they had seen on the screen. The Senate House building for example 'reminded' them of New York. Images such as this are used by the media to locate action. They are subconsciously absorbed by us and come to symbolize cities, countries etc. We all hold visual memories from photos or pictures that come to symbolize our childhood or important events in our lives and this is part of the process of making connections between past and present and the different experiences we have along the way. So visual images become part of our own autobiographies (Spence and Holland, 1991; Kuhn,1985). This is one of the key



roles that television plays for children living in different locations and in communities globally.

However, there is always the problem of what images are portrayed, and for what purposes. Refugee children need to be able to negotiate the conflicting images with which they are confronted and the conflicting emotions they provoke. Nyota said on several occasions that all the TV said about Africa was bad, that all they showed was war and starving people. Her own history of family trauma and flight from Zaire (now The Democratic Republic of the Congo) would concur with this. However, the family stories of home, success and affluence and her own parents' unhappiness and struggle in this country and their commitment to their home country made this a potential area of conflict for her.

When Nyota replied to my question about why her parents watched French channels on TV I was frustrated by her simplistic answer: she said that it was because they speak French. On reflection, however, what she was saying was not only directly true but also true in the sense that her parents watched French channels because their references are more French than English. In the colonial history of their country they belong with what is connected to France, not England. Their place of familiarity was with the French channel while for her, her references were more and more English and her place was with English/American programmes (Hargreaves and Mahjoub, 1997). The bridges that parents try to make across these gulfs are vast and they utilise what is available to them.

The Bengali children talked about their family uses of videos in this context. They tended to watch Hindi videos together as a family. The language was often unfamiliar to the children but the images were familiar and culturally closer to the Bengali traditions. The sense that they were sharing something of their parents' reference points was what was important. They felt their parents belonged in Bangladesh while they belonged to England but they could share both on different levels (Gillespie, 1995).

In this section I have highlighted some of the ways in which the children were developing multiple loyalties and implying that this is unique in some way to migrant children. In her

discussions about place, home and globalization, Massey (1992) sounds a word of caution. Her argument, quite rightly, is that place and home have never been closed and uncontested but rather defined differently by culture, gender and age – by difference. “That place called home was never an unmediated experience” (ibid:8). However, the point remains that in relation to each other these children and their families were all negotiating different, more or less complex, relationships with different places and increasingly using more complex resources with which to do it. These resources themselves had implications for what kind of diversity they lived with and how they placed themselves within it.

#### **(v) News**

Although I had not anticipated spending a lot of time talking about the news with the children, it was clearly an important part of their media lives. In this section I draw on the discussion about children and news in Chapter 3 and expand my previous discussion in section (i by taking a closer look at the relationship that refugee and migrant children have with news broadcasts, particularly from and/or about their countries of origin.

In all my discussions with the adults, they stated that news was what they considered to be most important on television. Those from other countries gave news as the reason for their decision to have satellite or cable TV. Many wanted to watch in their own language to increase understanding even when their English was fluent. Of course it was not always possible to watch in their own language. There is no Somali or Ethiopian channel. Many of the Somalis watched either Italian or Arabic channels. There was a sense in which the national UK TV news was not enough, that there was not enough news from their parts of the world for this to be sufficient. Many, for example, watched CNN news as it was thought to be more international. There was almost a sense in which receiving news from beyond the national borders within which they now lived was a necessary part of their identities as migrant, as non-British. In addition national and ‘western’ news is often seen as presenting a point of view that maintains the present world order (Boyd-Barrett, 1997). By seeking out other news channels these families were also looking for different analyses of news events. This was so during the Gulf War but must have increased since the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.

As we saw in the first section of this chapter, for Safiyah, having satellite television made an emotional connection for her with the Arabic world. When we started talking about satellite TV her face lit up. She said that there was news about Palestine on British TV when there was ‘something serious’ happening but she wanted more news on a day to day basis (and more connection).

**Extract 48**

1    INT:            You were talking about television in the parents workshop and about  
2                    when you got satellite TV. When was that?  
3    SAFIYAH:      Since 1990  
4    INT:            Can you tell me a little about what this meant?  
5    SAFIYAH:      Before I got satellite I contact my home, or news about my home by  
6                    newspaper, Arabic newspaper, and little bit when I watch news TV but  
7                    after I got satellite it’s different because when I got satellite I feel I stay  
8                    with my home because I watch news about my home, about Arabic, about  
9                    everything. When I watch TV and there is some news about my home I  
10                   call the children and say, 'Come on, see your country, this is Jerusalem.  
11                   Look what’s happened there, to give them an idea about my home  
12    INT:            So it’s been very important for you?  
13    SAFIYAH:      Yes

Here Safiyah is extremely aware of the conflicts raging in her home country. The place she left has changed both physically and socially. She is caught in trying to keep track of the changes, trying to make sense of them herself and interpreting them for her children. The printed word, in the form of newspapers that contain news already several days old, is not enough. The immediate news and the visual images fulfil these needs better. She knows that when and if she ever returns she will be returning to a different place. For all the families coming from 'trouble' zones there is this disconnection between past and present. The place you remember no longer exists and you feel the need to build a visual connection even from a distance with the place so far away that is evolving. You are building almost new connections with that place, while at the same time building new connections with the place you are living in now (Aksoy and Robins, 2000).

Juba talked about knowing about her country through stories her parents had told her and from things she had seen on television. Her parents stressed that they used television a lot to increase their children's awareness of the world around them and their connections with Africa. Nyota's family were the same. Her mother kept a globe in their front room and used it to explain where the news was happening.

Samuel's family, as we saw in a previous section, had a very difficult relationship with television. As recent converts to Jehovah's Witness church they saw TV as an evil. Yet every time I visited it was on. They said they relied on it for news and indeed I had several long discussions about the news with them. Again they preferred CNN news because they felt it carried more news of Africa but also because it was altogether more international. They were also keen on documentaries about Africa on Discovery Channel and Samuel often talked about these.

While being 'connected' and creating continuities for these families the news also had other powerful influences especially on the children. I was struck by how often groups of children would refer to the international news when talking to each other. The dinner hall at school was often a place where major news items were shared.

As I mentioned above I was spending a lot of time in the school at the time of the Kosovan war and so much of the news conversation in the dinner hall revolved around this. Veton, a Kosovan boy, who had recently come into Year 6 was clearly very preoccupied at this time, looking very tired and pale. He was up late most nights watching CNN news with his father. One dinner time, a group of his class were sitting together when one of the girls came and joined them. She cut across all the previous conversation and started talking about the bombing which had started the previous day. The group rapidly joined in. Veton was struggling to participate but was finding it difficult because of the general noise in the hall and the language.

All the children were interested. They made connections between what Veton was saying with the reports they had all watched on television. He described talking to his grandparents

on the phone and what they had told his family: many houses in their area had been burned down. They could hear shooting nearby. People had come to their house for shelter. The group conversation moved on but Veton continued to talk to me. He started asking me more details about the shooting down of a helicopter as he hadn't understood everything on the news. His interpretation was that the Russians were to blame as they had been the only ones to support Milosovec in refusing peace talks. At this point Jima joined the table. He immediately joined in, saying he had been watching the news and he agreed with Veton in saying that the Russians and the Yugoslavs were to blame. He made a connection with what was happening at that same time with the new fighting between Eritrea and Ethiopia and with what had happened in the past.

This was all sophisticated, well-informed talk with deeply personal connections and I was very aware that this never happened in the classroom. For Veton it must have been very important to be able to talk with peers about what was happening, especially since there appeared to be no forum for him to talk elsewhere outside the home. It also allowed him to find connections with the experiences of other refugee children and realise that he was not alone. It was the development of a simple and effective public space within which new and old identities and relationships were being formed. This relates directly to the arguments made by Buckingham (1996, 2000b) about participation, news and citizenship but gives it an international dimension.

This type of dinner time discussion was not a one-off. I observed similar conversations in greater or lesser depth many times. In the boys' group knowledge of news and world events appeared to have high status and was used a lot in the group power play. For example in the following extract:

**Extract 49**

- 1 SAMUEL: Nelson Mandela
- 2 JIMA: Shut your mouth man. Stop being sad
- 3 EDSON: What? Nelson Mandela?
- 4 SAMUEL: That's my country's president though
- 5 JIMA: It isn't your country's!
- 6 SAMUEL: Yeah. That's where I come from

7 JIMA: You come from Kenya. He’s the president of South Africa, you fool!

This is a small incident in the long battles that took place between Jima and Samuel. They are looking at some magazines while making their posters. Samuel sees a photo of Mandela and mistakenly thinks that invoking Mandela might bring status. However, he gets his facts wrong and Jima rapidly turns it into a serious put down from which Samuel does not recover for the rest of the session.

The news sometimes had direct emotional effects on children (and on the research). During the time of my field work there were two major items of news that directly affected the Turkish/Kurdish children. First was the capture of Abdullah Ocalan, the Kurdish leader, and the second was a major earthquake.

On one of my visits to Leyla and Selve’s family the atmosphere was clearly very fraught. I couldn’t understand why the children kept telling me about men in masks with guns. I assumed it was a film they had been watching but I couldn’t understand why, in that case, their mother was so agitated. It was only afterwards, when I got home, and heard the news that Ocalan had been captured that I began to understand.

In several conversations with the girls over the following weeks the great significance that Ocalan held for them became clear. They described it in the following way. They said that for me I believed in Jesus and that for them they believed in Ocalan. His capture shook their personal security and it was after this that they kept asking me if I was 'a police'.

I would like to look at this in several stages. Firstly the immediate effect on me and the research was their raised suspicion. The capture took place during a school half term holiday. When they returned to school I made sure that I spoke to the girls. I saw Selve first and I said that I now understood what they were saying about the masks and the gunmen. I asked what news they had been watching and if their mother was upset. Selve looked at me with surprise saying: “Yes, how did you know?” She was reluctant to talk to me but really examined me about why I wanted to talk to her and what my work was about. I repeated what I had told

her before. Her older sister Leyla who was normally very over-friendly and often clung to me in the playground came over to collect Selve and hardly said hello, avoiding looking me in the eyes. Another Turkish/Kurdish child who was more established and confident came over and asked me directly, “Are you police? You’re police aren’t you?” Suddenly I could put things together. The Ocalan capture was followed by intense activity among the Kurdish community in London and their father was a part of this. They themselves had been to several events. Suddenly they felt threatened both by the capture which, although far away, had been so vividly depicted in their living rooms. Ocalan had not been in Turkey when he was captured but in Kenya, so this clearly said to them that wherever you are, you are not safe. The world becomes a small place and you cannot escape danger. There was clearly a very tense atmosphere at home but also in their community. There was police presence at some of the events they attended. They were suddenly on the outside, unwelcome and unsafe.

Over the next few weeks this developed for Leyla into a reworking of her memories of Turkey. Previously she had painted life there as a golden age of friendship and freedom but now she described Turkey to me as a bad and dangerous place. This was confirmed when the earthquake followed so soon after the capture of Ocalan and pictures of destruction were on the screens. She now described it as ‘sad’ and stated that she did not want to go there again. She was having a particularly difficult time at school, clearly partly affected by all these events. She must have felt that she had no home, no place of security. Selve too said that she was crying a lot at school although she clearly did have friends and was coping better than her sister. Leyla described having nightmares of being captured and chased, but she did not go to her mother for comfort but into her sister’s bed. She said she did not talk to her mother about what was happening. This kind of situation is described by Richman (1998) in her teacher’s manual about working with refugee children. It describes how refugee children often do not want to add to their parents’ worries and so keep their own fears to themselves.

For Selve her attitude hardened. She was now quite openly anti-Muslim in her attitudes. She took the line that she didn’t like Muslim people in Turkey. Ocalan had been captured by Muslims and therefore they were bad people. Her memory of what had been said on news broadcasts was very precise. She said that two women had been interviewed and had said that

they didn’t want Ocalan’s ‘sorry’ but they wanted him dead. She repeatedly asked me what I thought about Muslims and finally she qualified her opinion by saying that Muslims from Rhaxma’s country were alright. She maintained her low opinion of Bangladeshis.

As with the Ocalan capture the earthquake and its reporting shook the children's security. Here Leyla is talking about the news:

**Extract 50**

1 INT: Yeah? What's happening in the news?  
2 LEYLA: Lots of things.  
3 INT: Nothing particular?  
4 LEYLA: In Turkey it’s sad  
5 INT: Is it? why?  
6 LEYLA: All of the houses are broken  
7 INT: Oh the earthquake  
8 LEYLA: I don’t want to go Turkey actually  
9 INT: Don’t you - because of that? But they are not broken everywhere  
10 LEYLA: I saw it last time it was - a baby was dead - even my aunty doesn’t live in  
11 a house. She’s got a broken house and she lives in ...  
12 INT: So the earthquake happened where your family are from?  
13 LEYLA: It was in Germany. My aunty didn’t leave, my just aunty lives there  
14 INT: In Germany or Turkey?  
15 LEYLA: In Germany. And she comes back to Turkey to see them  
16 INT: Oh so she lives in Germany but goes back to Turkey?  
17 LEYLA: Yeah, but now she's gone to Turkey ‘cos it’s been bad in Germany. So  
18 she lives in Turkey now  
19 INT: What's been bad in Germany?  
20 LEYLA: Yeah, all the houses are broken and there isn’t any water  
21 INT: In Germany?  
22 LEYLA: Yeah there isn't any water to drink. I don’t know what's happened. It  
23 scary [she makes audible shivering noises] but in Turkey I've got loads of  
24 friends down there, loads, loads, loads. When I was about 5 years old or 4  
25 in Turkey I wouldn’t be any scared. If somebody comes I wouldn’t be  
26 scared. At nights I play with my friends till about 10 o'clock I don’t come  
27 inside till it’s 11 o'clock. I come out in the morning I go outside at 10  
28 o'clock and I still want to play but now I'm scared. It’s scaredy now

Leyla starts by expressing her feeling of sadness at the destruction (lines 4-11) and separates herself, saying she no longer wants to go there (line 8). Then she begins to confuse something that has happened to her aunt in Germany (line 13) with the situation in Turkey. She conveys a general level of fear and insecurity. But more interesting and fundamental



than the immediate emotions the news reports evoke is the way they reshape her memory. Leyla describes her happiness there as a child and compares this with her fears here 23-28). But then she rapidly reminds herself that it is no longer like that (line 28) but is equally scary there as it is here or in Germany.

In a later interview both children confirmed that they now didn't want to go to Turkey and that although they had good memories of it, it was really a bad place. The complications of living with contradictory emotions about the place they were born and to which they still had very strong emotional connections even though they no longer lived there appeared to be brought into sharp focus with news items such as these. Visual images of the place you know are more powerful sparks to memories than written or spoken words, and rather than creating connections can exacerbate feelings of separation, especially in times of crisis when you feel very far away and powerless. Dearly held memories will come into stark opposition with the media portrayed realities and must make both those memories and what is today in your new life feel insecure. For other children who have moved here as a result of other types of conflicts, different news items will also provoke profound memories, emotions and tensions.

The main and very simple point here is that news events reported from and about your country of origin have very direct effects on your life in your new country. Children who have direct experience of war, trauma and forced migration are affected by similar events elsewhere and this will revive memories. Children who have experience of migration will often see world events as closely connected to their lives and see themselves not as only part of the local but in a very personal way part of the global. This was not reflected in the everyday life of the formal school but children needed to, and often managed to, find informal spaces in which to share these events.

Direct news events can create feelings of separation and isolation. This can be exacerbated by the kind of reception refugees and migrants receive in the press of the host country as I have discussed in Chapter 2. On the other hand, TV talk about world events, sports, and the kinds of diasporic TV described in the sections above allow children to develop a working understanding of the interrelationships between the local and the global. These are

opportunities to work through the multiple places of belonging and home that are central to the experience of migration.

## **(v) Conclusion**

In this chapter I have focused specifically on TV talk in the lives of refugee and migrant children. In many ways it is a false distinction to separate their experience from that of other children. All the forms of TV talk discussed in Chapter 7 are represented here. The forms remain the same. However, a wider variety of media resources are used in different ways within the everyday lives of these families and children and they have different significance both for identity formation and for the development of a sense of place and belonging.

The development of global TV facilitates migratory patterns of living in many ways and this in turn promotes greater possibilities of building everyday transnational life. Families are more able to sustain contact with people, language and culture across distance. They are more able to feel they belong in different ways to different places. Within the home, generational intimacy and understanding is promoted by the possibility of watching programmes that connect with the countries of origin. The children in this study used television, often quite consciously, as a resource for checking different identities against each other in ways that their non-migrant friends did not. These were not simply ones of ethnicity or origin but incorporated other differences as they crossed ethnicity such as class, religion, gender. The possibilities of developing new ethnic or hybrid identities on both sides are there as these different experiences rub up against each other but in the case of the refugee or migrant child this did not outweigh the greater need to develop the ability to live with multiple identities. In many cases this is can be personally painful especially in cases where memories are traumatic and connections broken.

On the other hand, there were several ways in which the relationship between the children in this study and the media they used was a lot more complex than such a picture allows. As I have stressed earlier, media are not neutral: they are products of the societies in which they are produced and of economic and cultural power. TV talk is also embedded in everyday life

and power relations. It is a platform on which existing exclusions are acted out. The social position of refugees and migrants is reflected in the media and in TV talk and these children are in constant negotiation with the ways in which they as individuals, as members of families and ethnic communities and as a collective ‘other’ are socially both excluded and included.

## CHAPTER 9 GETTING TO KNOW JIMA AND RHAXMA

### Introduction

In the Chapters 7 and 8 I viewed the ways in which TV talk operated in the lives of the children in this study in relation to negotiations in the public, social sphere. This chapter focuses in on two individual children. It takes a more personalised and psychological look at what the inner motivations or personal ‘themes’ for each child might be. I look at how my relationship with them developed and what my connections are with what I perceive as their themes. I look at their preferred media characters and programmes and put forward ideas about how these are symbolic of their preoccupations. I examine what roles these play in their lives.

The two children are very different. They are different in sex, age, religion, country of origin, family living arrangements, access to television, culture and aspirations. What they share is their refugee status in this country, their school and locality. They are both Black African (Somali, from Mogadishu; Ethiopian, from Addis Ababa). I hope to show that while their relationships with television reflect the differences between them, both social and psychological, there are also significant similarities that relate to their shared situations and that are different from their peers.

These case studies, while detailed, are necessarily only part of the whole picture. They contain what Rhaxma and Jima and their families allowed me access to. So my relationship with them and my role as researcher are central to the context of the accounts I will give. Walkerdine (1997) talks of the subjective in research and the impossibility of excluding this, of the role of fantasy and the meanings that we make of our subjects and that they make of us. Throughout my work with these children I became more and more aware of where I did not ask the questions I wanted to ask and where their stories highlighted aspects of myself I preferred to keep hidden. My relationship with them was not objective or straightforward with one simple interpretation. It was emotional, complex and often difficult to negotiate. It is these aspects that underlie parts of this chapter.

There are three sections on each child. The first sections for each child focus on negotiations over access to them and their families and my developing relationship with them. This links with some of the discussion in the methodology chapter. In the second sections I analyse my group data again. This time I track each child and draw out their stories, themes and relationships within the group. Since access was different in each case I have also presented this differently. In the case of Jima I draw on data gathered over the whole period of the field work in many different locations. For Rhaxma, where access was restricted to the school environment, I concentrate on an analysis of transcriptions of group work sessions. This links with and gives a different perspective on Chapters 7 and 8.

Finally in the third sections I look at particular programmes that they named as their favourites, that their peers identified them with, and which symbolised for me their situations and personal struggles. Here I am aiming to engage with a psychological view of their media uses. I am trying to get a little way behind the screen of the private. I will not try to make any definitive analysis as this becomes reductive and ultimately unhelpful but I am aiming to explore in what ways these programmes had deeper symbolic resonance for them. How they related to these programmes changed over the time I knew them and will have changed again since then. What I aim to do here is to illustrate that these programmes performed different kinds of functions for them both in the private and public spheres of their lives.

#### **(i) Jima**

In this section I will be giving a narrative account of my relationship with Jima. I will be trying to sift out the ways in which we negotiated our contact with each other, how access was never straightforward and how this affected the research process in relation to him. Jima, his story and his strategies for life affected me deeply. The isolation that he and his father experienced and the depression that his father clearly suffered from touched a nerve in my own story. I came to understand some of the patterns I had not before acknowledged

of my own parental family, as migrants without family in this country. One of the most difficult aspects of the fieldwork was negotiating the right amount of distance, while also responding to some of their immediate needs.

Jima was from Ethiopia and at the time of the fieldwork was 10 years old. I had known him when I used to teach at the school. I can still clearly remember the day he first came to the school at the age of 6. He was unable to sit still for a second and spent most of the time running around grabbing things and people. Over the years he remained a live wire, often in trouble, attention seeking and very charming. He had come here with his father, Lema, and they were applying for asylum. Their case was rejected and they started on the appeal process. They were still waiting for an appeal hearing at the time of my study all those years later. They had recently been re-housed due to racist attacks at their previous flat. They appeared to be very isolated. Lema kept in telephone contact with his parental family and was distraught when he was not able to go to his mother's funeral.

Even by the end of the fieldwork, when I had grown close to both of them, I was still left with large gaps in the puzzle I was trying to assemble of their lives. There was a sense in which they deliberately had few connections here and that his father preferred to keep very separate. He had been up to the school several times to complain that people were asking too many questions and the teachers appeared to be quite nervous of him. When I showed the video that the boys group made at a conference, an Ethiopian community worker came up to me afterwards and asked how I had managed to get permission for Jimma to take part in the research. He said that in his experience of working with Ethiopians in this country, it was extremely difficult to have this kind of access. I have no way of knowing the truth about this and am reluctant to draw any generalisations. However, it did make me think differently about the problems I had experienced in gaining access and acknowledge the other side of the coin a little more. This process must have been extremely difficult for Jimma's father and I greatly appreciate the help he gave, bearing in mind his circumstances and the level of distrust he lives with.

At the start of the field work I arranged to meet Lema at the school to discuss Jima participating. He remembered me and the work I had done with Jima as a teacher. But he was very reticent at first about this project, especially when I mentioned home visits and interviews with him as well as Jima. He recognised the importance of television in Jima's life but could not see what I was trying to achieve with the project. However, because he felt that Jima would enjoy it and benefit from the extra attention, he agreed that he could take part. He refused to be interviewed himself but agreed to me visiting their home from time to time. When, at the end of the project, he viewed the boys group video he was impressed, especially with the animation that Jima had made. Jima was often nervous with his father and would get very upset if he ever lost a piece of clothing. He was extremely conscious of their financial struggle and the effort his father made to dress him well and keep up appearances.

When I first reappeared at the school in my new role as researcher, Jima was quite reticent about talking to me. He was a child who needed to understand social situations and who put a lot of energy into trying to read them. He could not understand what my role was. I was in the playground but was not behaving as a teacher as I used to. He needed time to assess the new situation. In early interviews with him he was clearly trying to sort this out. On one occasion he asked how I could be a student again after I had already trained. In any case I was clearly too old to be a student. He knew this because he lived next to a student residence and he had seen them through the windows watching The Simpsons. When the tutor who assisted in making the animations for the group video came to the school he again set about trying to place her. She had done a drawing of herself getting the bus to work. He immediately started asking her if she lived in the areas that he knew this bus passed through. He set great store by knowing the locality and by placing people, actions and television references into it. Unlike Rhaxma he was able to use this as another resource through which to locate himself and make sense of his world.

Gradually Jima relaxed with me. Since he considered himself a media expert, he claimed great status from the fact that we discussed television and were going to make a video. For the boys, this and the fact that they missed lessons and went on outings facilitated a lot of

my work. While Jima clearly enjoyed the work we did, he viewed it primarily as a route to gaining privileged status within the peer group. Throughout the activity sessions it was the social interaction that was his focus rather than the drawing or the video work. However, when it came to making the animation he became very focused. During classroom observations it was clear that his attention was rarely work focused and he was always disrupting his neighbours and/or having trouble with the work.

On one school outing to a music event he was extremely disruptive causing embarrassment to the teachers and getting into trouble at school on his return. There were a series of workshops featuring different international music traditions. Jima was very annoyed that he was put into the Indian workshop and most of the time refused to participate. He felt that this group represented a culture that had low ‘street cred’ and therefore less social status. He therefore wanted to distance himself from it. It was a case of encountering an ‘other’ that he considered in the eyes of his peers had less power and by associating or acquiescing to participation he was lessening his own status.

After the presentations there was a performance by an internationally known Egyptian singer. Several of the children in our group knew him from their parents and were incredibly excited to see him perform. Jima was clearly thrown by the fact that he didn’t know him and then proceeded to mock what was unfamiliar. This included the fact that the singers took their shoes off before going on stage as well as the unfamiliar sounds of the music itself. He refused to join in despite the fact that there was a general air of excitement.

When the group visited my house to see the finished video (because the school video had broken down) Jima was again intimidated at first by the unfamiliar surroundings and then started to misbehave and mess up my daughter’s room. Later in the week we had a long talk about respect and he acknowledged that he had behaved badly. On this outing Jima was incredulous that I had lived in the same place for 10 years and couldn’t imagine doing that, claiming that it would be too boring. He said he would smash the place up because the streets were too quiet. He knew landmarks nearly all the way to my house and called



them out but he had never seen the Arsenal football stadium near me as it was not directly on the bus route. His father said Jima knew his way anywhere in London on the buses. He had clearly travelled about a lot on his own. He sometimes talked about going to the West End with his father to play Sega games.

He had a keen sense of locality and prided himself in knowing how to get about, the short cuts and the strange places. He would tell stories about how he and his friends would cause trouble in the neighbourhood. Some of his favourite stories were about how he would harass people coming out of a local gay bookshop. Again he was distancing himself from a group he considered both less powerful than himself but also deeply threatening.

As with Rhaxma, working with Jima was an almost constant negotiation for access. I never managed to do a taped interview with his father. I had several long discussions with him but he was always nervous and rarely told me the whole story about anything. At an early point in the study, after one or two very difficult talks both with Jima and his father it transpired that the problem was that their television had broken down and neither of them wanted to admit it. They also assumed that without a television Jima would not be able to take part in my study. This would have been difficult, since I was planning to talk with him regularly about what he was watching. I decided to buy them a second hand set from my expenses fund and although he was very embarrassed Jima's father did accept it. I had wanted to deliver it on a Friday evening as that would give me an opportunity to watch wrestling with them but (as ever) the answer phone was on when I rang to confirm the arrangement.

When this happened or when I came round (even when prearranged) and there was no answer, I often suspected that he was in fact in. At other times I would call and Jima would answer and say his Dad was out. Here again there were unspoken rules, understandings and lines of enquiry that I could not pursue without breaking trust. Jima spent a fair amount of time either alone at home or out in the neighbourhood unsupervised. On this occasion I called by the following morning and Lema did answer the door . I spent some time with them setting up the television, watching wrestling and having lunch. Jima then

went off to do the shopping and I stayed on and talked with Lema. We talked for some time about Ethiopia and his family but at some point he became very agitated and it was time to leave.

We met several times after that and towards the end of the study he contacted me to help him decide about a secondary school for Jima. This was a time of great tension for Jima. He said he felt that his father didn't know what to do and he was worried that he would not get a place. I did try to help. As with Rhaxma, this took me beyond the strict boundaries of research but I saw it almost as an exchange. I talked with Lema about the different schools and went with them to visit the one that seemed most suitable and possible.

As with other parents Jima's father did not understand why the school's interest would extend beyond learning within school. In many ways, although he needed help and sometimes asked for it, he felt threatened by talking to the school. He said that he wanted Jima to take part in activities because the school said it would be good for him but he seemed to doubt this himself. In the last conversation I had with him he talked at length about why they had left Ethiopia and about the fact he could never return. He was clearly having a lot of trouble with Jima at home and felt unable to discipline him. He felt that in this country you are not free to parent your child and felt threatened by the idea that the Social Services had the power to take Jima away from him. This was a similar fear to that expressed by the Turkish/Kurdish mothers. I suggested that he sought help from a refugee counselling organisation and that this might help Jima as well. He refused because he believed this would be admitting that he couldn't cope and that therefore Jima would indeed be taken away from him.

There are several themes running through this account. The insecurity and lack of trust of the outside world was a condition of Jima's life both objectively as regards his immigration status but also, and connected to this, within his daily home life and his father's state of mind. They lived within, often justified, levels of fear but also of paranoia about the authorities and institutions of this country. These two factors were central to the level and type of access I had as a researcher and to the relationship I developed with Jima.

It is also clear that Jima built much of his self esteem and measured his status on his knowledge of, and control over, his locality. His television expertise was part of this and enabled him to have some control, at least, over his social world. As we shall see in the next section, Jima’s relationship with TV allows him, in the social sphere of his peer group, both to cope with these separations and instabilities in his life and also to increase his self esteem and status.

**(ii) Jima: through the data**

This section is concerned with Jima’s relationship with television. I will be using the data to examine the ways in which he uses TV talk to negotiate friendship and peer togetherness and to gain status. I will also look at the ways in which he uses it to defend his privacy and negotiate what he allows to be public.

**(a) Negotiating friendship, peer togetherness and status**

When Jima talked about when he first came to this country and the process of making friends he never mentioned learning the language. What he focused on was learning how children behave – and particularly what they talked about. He said that he became interested in television when he realised how much people here watched and talked about it.

**Extract 51**

1

JIMA:

[Silent for a bit)] I didn’t even really think about TV when I was there

2

[in Ethiopia]

3

INT:

No?

4

JIMA:

I know that there are such things as TV and stuff and other

5

programmes and stuff. People talk about them but usually I’m not

6

interested in them and as soon as I came to this country everybody

7

talked about it more than they talk about it in my country. So then I

8

started liking it

And in another interview

**Extract 52**

1 INT: OK and what do you think is important for you about having a  
2 television?  
3 JIMA: That you can talk to your friends about it

His priority is clear. Television is not a route to escape but an important aspect of his social life. As outlined in Chapter 7, this TV talk involves the story lines, the characters and the ‘behind the scenes’ knowledge, but above all it means knowing the details. Jima was the acknowledged expert on all this. When we were filming for the video at Estava and Denis’s flat they were acting out the fighting moves of the different wrestlers. They all deferred to Jima. He often corrected them, demonstrating where he felt they had slightly the wrong angle or foot placement. Veering between laughter and seriousness, they demonstrated in slow motion for the camera, their memories of past fights or how a fighter had developed a new move. Wrestling gave Jima a place that he felt safe with in this group of friends.

Jima aimed to develop a group of friends so it was important that his interests allowed this. In the wrestling activity described above there were two important things happening. Firstly TV talk about wrestling facilitated the sense of group togetherness that the boys sought for their friendship to work. Secondly, for Jima, in particular, being the expert and being called on to demonstrate this knowledge gave Jima a status in the group that other activities did not. It allowed him access to the group and therefore to friendship and inclusion. He was also adept at using TV references to promote a connection and sense of togetherness. Often, after initiating a topic, he would sit back and let the discussion roll, only intervening to either keep it on track or to start it off in a new direction.

In this extract, Jima, Evans and myself are walking from Jima’s home to the shop Forbidden Planet on New Oxford Street. This is Jima’s backyard. He has taken us through the British Museum as a short cut. The two boys hadn’t seen each other for a week or so as it was holidays. They had spent almost the entire walk so far talking about what they had

watched on television and the relative merits of The Simpsons and South Park. Samuel had not been allowed to watch South Park, so after making the point that he had and gaining status from this (see below) Jima moves the talk back to The Simpsons, a topic which they can both share. Jima had mentioned the hot dog stand outside the British Museum, a reference whose significance I did not understand at first. Clearly Samuel did. There was a hot dog refrain between them for several minutes, of which the following is an extract.

**Extract 53**

1 JIMA: Hot dogs hot dogs  
2 SAMUEL: Homer is so, he is so funny  
3 JIMA: He goes to the funeral and the hot dog man comes...  
4 SAMUEL: Yeah, 'hot dogs hot dogs'. And Marge goes 'why are you following  
5 my husband around?' and he goes, 'because he's good value for  
6 money'. Aha that was so funny. My dad laughed, and laughed and  
7 laughed when he heard that bit.  
8 INT: When he heard 'good value for money'?  
9 SAMUEL: Yeah, cos there's this hot dog man and they are going to a funeral and  
10 there is this hot dog man.  
11 JIMA: And he always follows  
12 SAMUEL: And he is always following Homer and then Marge goes, 'Why are you  
13 following my husband?' and he goes, 'Cos he's great value for  
14 money'. Cos he always pays for something. There it is Jima [pointing  
15 out the hot dog stand]. 'Hot Dogs Hot Dogs'. Two pounds? A hot dog  
16 for two pounds?  
17 INT: Yeah we're right by the British Museum you see.

The talk brings them together, creates a shared space that they can both enjoy without explanation. They use their environment to spark off other shared memories but it is interesting here that, as on other occasions, after the initial input most of the talk is by Samuel. In fact Jima allows Samuel to interrupt him (line 12) which is very unusual. The exchange also allows other more private topics to be touched on. Samuel (line 6) mentions how his father enjoys the show. I was interested to hear this since he had always presented a very anti TV image to me and I would have assumed that The Simpsons would not be approved of. It also introduces the question of cost (line 15) and expenses, a topic that Samuel and Jima shared an alliance on in opposition to Estava and Denis who were in a very different economic bracket. This topic was returned to several times during the

afternoon. This exchange provides Jima with the opportunity to show off his television expertise, to score status points and to locate himself firmly in his neighbourhood.

Status was particularly important for Jima and he used his television knowledge to gain access to those older or more popular boys in several ways. He would claim greater world or worldly knowledge either by knowing more about the news or the goings on in the neighbourhood or by playing on the age dangerous territory of forbidden or adult programmes. Thus as we saw in the section on news in chapter 7, Jima said he watched the news in case he was asked about it. He prided himself on this knowledge and demonstrated it in current affairs discussions, notably in the dinner hall (see Chapter 8). He also used this knowledge to press home advantage over his peers – to gain status and to claim adult knowledge. However, this also extended to more taboo topics.

This extract is from one of the group sessions we had before school when they were writing their own Simpsons style story. In some ways I realized afterwards that this activity was a mistake on my part as I was mixing visual and written media. They found it almost impossible to present their stories in written form and it would have been more successful to have done these either in comic strip form or verbally. However it did lead to plenty of useful chat.

Here Jima is dominating the scene: scoring points to impress the older boys and playing with his superior knowledge of the subject and terminology to put one of the group down.

**Extract 54**

- 1
- DENIS:
- It said that Bart, in this episode it said that Bart was gay
- 2
- JIMA:
- Yeah, yesterday innit
- 3
- ESTAVA:
- Yeah yesterday
- 4
- JIMA:
- Yeah and that man he was telling them...
- 5
- ESTAVA:
- Yeah
- 6
- JIMA:
- About their son...
- 7
- ESTAVA:
- Yeah
- 8
- JIMA:
- And he's got Millhouses' books...
- 9
- ESTAVA:
- Yeah
- 10
- JIMA:
- And he goes. It seems to me like your son is...

11 ESTAVA: ...gay  
12 JIMA: ...homosexual. And then Marge goes, ‘BART’S GAY!’ and he goes,  
13 ‘wrong file, sorry.’ And he puts it down and it says Millhouse.  
14 ESTAVA: Yeah  
15 [They all laugh]  
16 JIMA: That was funny, boy. How comes you don’t watch Simpsons no more?  
17 SAMUEL: I can’t  
18 JIMA: Why?  
19 SAMUEL: Cos my dad’s in control of the remote control. I can’t watch anything  
20 JIMA: I’m in control every day on that remote control  
21 INT: So your dad doesn’t want you to watch Simpsons?  
22 JIMA: I hide it in my bed  
23 SAMUEL: He does but he always wants to watch the news  
24 JIMA: hide it and when I come back from school I switch it on

This time it is not Jima who introduces the topic but he avidly takes it up to play with, claiming the knowledge (line 2). He takes over the telling of the story. He keeps control of it (lines 4, 6, 8,10, 12) while Estava takes up the chorus (lines 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 14). Jima continues until he gets the approval, through laughter, of the rest of the group (line 15). In line 12 he says the forbidden word, homosexual, and somehow this appears to confirm the group’s togetherness in their opposition to gayness. They all know about Jima’s activities harassing customers of the bookshop Gays the Word. Jima then turns his attention to Samuel who has not yet taken part. He hits where it hurts (line 16). By asking why Samuel no longer watches The Simpsons he claims age and independence status over him. He knows that Samuel is often not allowed to watch it and is very closely supervised at home. Samuel admits that he does not have control at home (line 19) and Jima runs with this, claiming that he controls the remote at home (lines 20, 22, 24). Interestingly there is no remote control at Jima’s house but this is too good an opportunity to put Samuel down to be missed by such details. As far as Samuel is concerned there are several points of interest here. Samuel avoids putting his father down and protects his family. Also this extract contradicts the previous one, where he states that his father enjoys The Simpsons. This contradiction is in line with the family’s complicated relationship with television and their new religion as Jehovah’s Witnesses.

This analysis illustrates some of the ways in which Jima uses TV talk to gain access to the group of friends, to be and feel included and to play power games within the group. He

uses it to build status and compensate for his lack of status in this country. He also uses it to negotiate what is private and what is allowed to be public in his life.

**(b) Defending the private (exclusion)/ negotiating the public (inclusion)**

Up to now I have concentrated on how Jima uses television to include himself within and inform himself about the social processes around him: his use of television to facilitate social inclusion. However there are two very significant ways in which he uses TV to defend his private space and hide his exclusion (as an asylum seeker) or in some senses to confirm his exclusion. In the animation he made for the video he talked about never thinking about the future. This voice over is built from a longer interview of which this is an extract.

**Extract 55**

1 INT: OK and what do you think about the future Jima? I know it's all a bit  
2 difficult at the moment isn't it?  
3 JIMA: I'm not really thinking about the future.  
4 INT: You think about today  
5 JIMA: You get on with what's happening  
6 INT: OK  
7 JIMA: Today is a new day and I get on with that  
8 INT: Uhu  
9 JIMA: I can't, I don't, I'm not, I wait, I can't wait till the day comes but what  
10 I'm thinking about usually in the night now, say 1999 is about to finish  
11 and its about to be the year 2000 so that's interesting. For me I just take  
12 it like each day I'd be, I'm not going t, whatever happens today I'm not  
13 going to talk about I wish this happen tomorrow. I'm going to say this  
14 happened today, and this happened today and just get on with it.  
15 [his voice has gone very staccato and he is leaning back in his chair  
16 with his arms behind his head]  
17 INT: Uhu. That's quite hard to do though isn't it?  
18 JIMA: Yeah, most people talk about the future (very softly)  
19 INT: Hm and you don't do that  
20 [silence]  
21 INT: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about yourself, your  
22 history, and your past?  
23 JIMA: I like laughing  
24 INT: You like laughing? At what?  
25 JIMA: Jokes, any jokes make me laugh  
26 INT: OK



In his first responses to my question about the future I can hear his father talking (lines 3,5,7). He is giving the response that they have talked about together. Then in line 9 he gets confused. It becomes difficult for him to express the situation for himself. His voice changes. He is trying to express the confusion in himself, at this particular time, when all around him there is talk about the future, the new millennium, and for him he can't think ahead. He can only go so far as to say it is "interesting" which implies a distance from his life and feelings. When he acknowledges his difference from his friends his voice is almost inaudible (line 11-14). I decide to pull back (lines 17,19,21,24) as this is clearly painful territory for him and he immediately bounces back, with relief, with the image of the joker (lines 23,25), the classic defence. I was extremely moved by this interview and felt that he had summed up the most fundamental social exclusion in the words. "I'm not really thinking about the future" (line 3). To me it came to explain to some degree his social, behavioural and academic difficulties.

As I have indicated he and his father are asylum seekers and have been for several years. Their case was awaiting appeal. He knew that his father thought there was a good chance they would not be successful. Jima said that he was different from other children because he couldn't think ahead about his future, couldn't plan but couldn't even conceptualise a future, as he had no idea where it might be.

His use of television was very particular to these circumstances. This is apparent in two ways. In peer-group discussions, if things got too personal or too serious he would deflect the conversation by mentioning something funny that happened on TV, effectively drawing the children back into his created television world and back to what they had in common. By contrast, in the classroom, where he was considered a problem both in terms of behaviour and learning, he used TV to subvert; to distract others from working, to avoid working himself, to create the excitement and humour that he thrived on. With no future ahead he saw no point in the learning in front of him. He lived in the moment and at that moment he would rather have fun.

When we were making the video, I asked the group to decide five things that were important to them and one TV character that represented that thing. Jima chose Kenny from South Park to represent education, “because he tries but he keeps getting killed”. This represented his own situation. He used what was available to him to include himself in the processes but he was unable to overcome the exclusion he felt. Under the category of ‘friends’ the group chose one of the wrestlers, The Rock. In relation to Jima this again made sense. He said that he had no particular friends but that he had loads of friends. Again he spread himself thinly so that he did not need to develop any intimacy. He described The Rock as having ‘loads of friends’, yet he said he didn’t know any of them.

At the end of the interview above he said that the thing he wanted to say about himself was that he likes jokes. It is indeed very clear that he used TV references in the classic joker mode, to make social commentary, to hide his private self and to hide his intelligence. The programmes, of course, that fit into this were his favourites: The Simpsons and South Park.

In this section I have tried to draw out some of the main points about Jima’s use of television. I have aimed to illustrate to what extent Jima held onto his identity as Ethiopian, as a refugee and as the ‘excluded’, the things over which he had no control; and yet I have also tried to show how he was able to use his agency to cope with the changing social landscapes in order to create zones of inclusion. Jima appeared to me to use TV and TV talk very effectively to create a familiar world outside the home that he could refer to and to defend against the uncertainties of the future. He promoted the shared space of TV enabling him to make successful social connections. He gained status through being the expert. He learned about different types of social situations. He defended against too much entry into his private space. He used TV humour to subvert what he found difficult. He used TV to avoid dwelling on the differences between himself and his friends.

In the next section I will be studying Jima’s favourite TV programmes, in particular The Simpsons, and looking at some of the underlying reasons why this text has such symbolic significance for him.

**(iii) Jima: through his favourite programmes**

Jima's favourite programmes were The Simpsons, South Park and WWF. In Chapter 7 I looked specifically at The Simpsons. I discussed its themes and the ways in which it plays with notions of family and subversion. In that section the focus was on the role it played in the group dynamics among the boys. I would now like to look at some of the more personal ways in which both The Simpsons and South Park resonate with Jima's personal themes and preoccupations.

The Simpsons has become a core piece of contemporary popular culture. In my work with Jima, it was so central to ways in which he talked and engaged socially with his friends that it has been strangely difficult to analyse the deeper meanings that it might have for him. This is partly because they almost become so obvious I am fearful that what I say will be interpreted as being too reductive.

The subjective experiences and preoccupations that constitute children's personal 'themas' (Bachmair, 1990) and that motivate them individually are acted out and interpreted through their friendships. Television has a symbolic resonance in this interpretative play between the social and the personal. Particular programmes will have particular resonance with certain children or friendship groups according to their personal experiences and psychological needs. This is the idea on which Bachmair (ibid) bases much of his television audience research. This approach matches studies such as those undertaken by Walkerdine (1997) in her critique of Cultural Studies' early inability to include the deeply personal and psychological aspects of our media lives. The need to look beyond the surface and the social interactive ways in which we talk about and relate to television is now widely accepted. Walkerdine talks about the fantasy/play relationships that her research subjects had with particular programmes (some of them we would rather not admit to watching) as a form of resistance to the oppressive social positions they inhabited. She takes up the themes of resistance. Like Bachmair, she emphasises the subjective and the symbolic within the contexts of the social but, unlike Bachmair, she politicises it. What

I would like to explore in this section are the ways in which Jima’s personal themes are reflected in and also evoke those themes (family, locality and belonging and humour) that are central to both The Simpsons and South Park.

How can The Simpsons be symbolic for Jima? His family does not match the family norm. He is living with his father, the single child of a single father who is extremely isolated from the host community and extremely distrustful of it. His mother lives in Ethiopia with his older brother and a new family with younger half siblings. He has no contact with them. His father is often emotionally absent and deeply depressed by the situation in which they find themselves in this country. He feels he has failed Jima. He speaks about how he himself has failed his own mother who expected him to be successful as the eldest son. Yet he wasn’t even able to attend her funeral. He is also often physically absent. Yet he, like Homer, often manages to do the right thing. Jima’s friends think he is ‘cool’ in the way he engages with similar TV tastes or goes with Jima to the West End to play Sega.

At one point, when leaving his home to go to the local park, the other boys started asking Jima about his mother and where she was and if she had left them and had another family now. They also asked why his father appeared not to have a girlfriend. It was interesting that after knowing each other for so long this had never been discussed before. Jima became silent and defensive and to my surprise hardly responded, almost appearing to cut himself off from the talk around him. On previous occasions Jima had always successfully avoided the issue, often by interrupting with some television reference that would distract them. This incident happened on his home territory and he seemed less able to counter the implications when he was in the situation. He rarely volunteered information about his father directly and when he did it was often in relation to television characters especially Homer Simpson.

**Extract 56**

1 JIMA: He’s sitting down on the sofa always. Just exactly like Homer. He

2 believes TV so he, ah. I think he’s copying it from him

However, on another occasion, as we saw previously, he said he was the opposite of Homer because he liked watching news not cartoons. There was a sense in which the critique of society and family life contained in The Simpsons allowed Jima to distance himself from both. He used the humour almost as a buffer to protect himself from becoming too connected to a place and people he did not know for sure would be part of his future. Both the critique and the humour allowed him to take a position of safe distance.

Jima defended his private space, never more so than when it came to family. So it was interesting that his favourite programmes revolved around family relationships. When asked what they learned from TV many of the children I talked to referred to information programmes (news and documentaries). Jima, on the other hand, talked about learning about family life and relationships. He talked about learning what it’s like to be a child in different situations. Thus, shortly after he and his father had been rehoused, due to incidents of racial harassment, he talked about Fresh Prince of Bel Air, saying:

**Extract 57**

1     JIMA:        Like there’s always a problem, in your family life or something like  
2                    that and Fresh Prince it’s something like if you live in a dangerous area  
3                    and you have a fight your mother and father are likely to want to move  
4                    you down to somewhere safe and let you live with your nephew and  
5                    there you might be um... popular. And its OK, that kind of stuff

He seems to be gaining comfort from the fact that like this TV family who moved away from trouble to be safe, his own family, despite its different configuration, had also been able to do this to keep him safe. Like the bumbling Homer who can get it right sometimes, his father had been able to cope despite his difficulties and save them from the situation. He had been able to protect Jima. However, the change in their own situation had not brought about the popularity depicted in the fictionalised account and he hesitates and lowers his voice before he expresses it, revealing another layer of fantasy that connected him to this episode. In a disagreement with Samuel about whether you could learn anything from The Simpsons, Jima was able to illustrate the ways in which it could be like your own family and teach you about family life. His argument was persuasive and Samuel

had to concede. From the passion of Jima's voice it was almost as if he was defending his own family.

As when he stated that he watched TV because that's what people talk about in this country, here he was saying that he watched TV for much more personal and emotional reasons. Jima watched a lot of TV with his Dad, especially The Simpsons and WWF. There is an interesting dynamic that goes on here in relation to adult and child roles. The Simpsons, as we saw above, is interesting in the way it appeals on different levels to both adult and child. For Jima this had an additional resonance. He was often the adult in his relationship with his father. He was the one who knew his way around, who was literate in English, who did the shopping and dealt with the vouchers on Saturday mornings, who engaged with the host society. On one level he could watch The Simpsons with his father as an equal. On the other hand, watching together was an opportunity for him to enjoy intimate time as a child with his father in a family setting. It also allowed him to fantasise about the mother who is absent and the siblings he does not have with him.

After the weekend away in Weymouth Jima gave me a gift that he had bought in the centre shop. It was a ring with a blue plastic stone. He did this privately. He had asked one of the other teachers to help him choose it. His father later explained to me that he had had to explain the significance of the ring to Jima but that he had insisted on giving it to me anyway. It was a difficult moment for me. In relation to the discussions we had had about family through The Simpsons, it was clearly significant and had to be handled right. He could easily have been ridiculed by the other boys. What it also did was to highlight the need he felt for other adults in his life, particularly his family life. When the boys' group were choosing five things that were most important to them in their lives (see Chapter 9) Jima chose 'other adults' which was rejected by the others. What other adults would this mean? There were clearly people I did not know about in their private lives but it would also mean teachers, TV characters, past adults in his life, people like myself. It could well be that through my work and the TV talk that we engaged in, I had become linked both to his 'real' life but also to his TV preoccupations. In this sense I would have a significance that could also explain the ring incident. Dunbar (1996) discusses the significance of TV

characters, especially in soaps, in fulfilling a sense of community. This certainly appeared to be the case with Jima.

To get his father's attention, Jima had to play the naughty boy, the Bart Simpson, or the Joker. When his father talked about Jima it was mostly to complain about how naughty he was and how out of control. When I was with the two of them together there was often tension and disagreement. Jima was clearly nervous of his father but also defiant. He was proud of the times that he made his father laugh by telling him jokes or funny things that had happened at school. When their television broke down Jima told me that they spent time telling each other funny stories. Several of these were funny stories about Jima as a baby in Ethiopia. In retelling them to me I was struck by how Jima's narrative resembled a Simpsons narrative. There was a similar subversive humour, the same detail of place and character. His father told me about times when Jima played tricks on him at home. So humour not only facilitated his peer friendships, as we have seen in Chapter 7, but also played an important role within the family, enabling Jima to 'make it right' at home. By being the joker he successfully got his father's attention. By watching The Simpsons they expanded their personal repertoire of funny stories they could enjoy together and this togetherness made a link for Jima to his past.

As I have said before, Jima spent a lot of time out and about in his locality. He knows and is known by the local shops and personalities. He knows the geography well and travels further afield on the buses. He takes pride in being the master of his area. Maybe he takes additional pride in the fact that he lives in one of the toughest areas of London and yet survives. Although The Simpsons is clearly based in suburban America, offering Jima a picture of a different environment, it has many of the same landmarks. Bart and his friends go out and about as Jima does. The action takes place in the school, the street, local institutions such as the library or the police station and the playgrounds. Jima uses the local environment to spark off or inform his TV stories and the circular action between TV story and what he does with his friends is almost symbiotic. He lives within the uncertainties of his future in this location but seems to gain a strength from seeing the safe aspects of his locality reflected in another's fictional one, being able to draw on it to strengthen his own.

Subversive, distancing humour, friendship and locality are also central themes in South Park, another of his favourite programmes. South Park is a much more hard-edged show, using ‘bad’ language and often controversial story lines. Again, its target audience is ambivalent. It is an animation that had a late night slot at first. This has gradually crept to an earlier broadcast time. Children and their relationships and adventures are the centre of the action. They are depicted separate from the adults, negotiating and subverting the realities of family and community life. But often they are the saviours of the community, the wise but wild ones. In fact the families appear to have little role in their lives. The children are portrayed as the ones who cope, find solutions and educate their elders. They take responsibility on their own.

This depiction, challenging our fundamental notions of childhood, is one of the very reasons it is controversial. But it reflects Jima’s life and his realities of having to cope with situations on his own. His friends were the centre of his life. It was his friends whom he relied on and through whom he experienced the world, since his father was so often unavailable to him. More often than not, the adults don’t understand what is happening and the children take charge just as Jima had to (Nixon, 2002). The action always takes place in the same community, with lots of repetitive action ideal for TV talk. In fact one of the highlights of the show is the death of Kenny, in every show by different and gruesome means. Again we have a survivor against the odds. Life treats Kenny cruelly but he always returns and is accepted by his peers.

In addition the controversial nature of South Park allowed Jima to follow his interest in claiming adult knowledge and freedoms. When it was still only shown late at night Jima would show off his knowledge of the show. His friends only rarely saw it. They had mixed feelings about it, wanting to watch it but not risking it. It was therefore ideal for claiming status.

Jima had developed very imaginative and intelligent survival mechanisms, including his uses of television. His choice of Kenny to symbolise the importance of education (see



Chapter 10) as the one who ‘tries hard but always gets killed’ was an accurate description of how he saw himself: the one who overcomes and survives despite being knocked down again and again. Bart too is more often than not unsuccessful but he survives and continues to provide the humour. Jima’s TV choices, especially The Simpsons, allowed him both on the social and inner levels to play with notions of family, survival and belonging.

#### **(iv) Rhaxma**

In this section I will be describing how I got to know Rhaxma, some of the ways in which we related to each other, how my access to her and her family evolved and how it affected the research process.

I first met Rhaxma in the school playground. She was 8 years old. Watching her that day gave me a good insight into the way that Rhaxma related to her friends and acted out her own preoccupations. She often initiated games. She controlled them and acted out her favourite TV programmes and characters. Sometimes she chose ones that she knew the others would enjoy. Her favourite themes were witches, kidnapping, robberies and ‘goodies’ and ‘baddies’. One of the group’s favourite games was ‘sisters’ and she adapted it to fit her preoccupations (see video). She became the victim, the slave, the ‘Cinderella’ and was badly treated by the other players. In the context of what I gradually got to know about her background I found these games quite disturbing. It was only through studying the data and writing up that I was able to really step back and accept what was happening here.

Rhaxma told me her story in different ways. At first she said she had come to this country three years ago, straight from Somalia but that she couldn’t remember anything about Somalia. This was the version that was in the school records and that the teachers told me. Then she told me in the playground that she had lived in Italy before coming here but that she had been born in Somalia. Then, in an interview, she filled this out to the fuller story that was later confirmed by her mother, Fatima, when I visited their home. Her mother was pregnant with her when she went to Italy to join her father. Her father, she said, was a

‘bad man’. Although he was rich he had left her mother without any money. Her mother had arranged for a couple to look after Rhaxma after she was born, until she could get some money. But when her mother wanted her back the foster parents had refused. Her mother had kidnapped her back and fled to England. This had been widely reported both on television and in the papers in Italy.

I had been quite worried about whether her parents would give permission for her to participate in the research, particularly after she had told me her full story. She had stressed that the foster parents were white and so I thought there might be an additional level of distrust of me taking a special interest in Rhaxma. However, the whole family came to the meeting I had arranged at the school and were quite willing for her to take part. Rhaxma later explained that her mother had told her that there were good and bad in all races. At this meeting I said that in exchange I would work with Rhaxma on her reading and perhaps visit and give her mother some language practice as well. Her mother was eager for this to happen. As it turned out this was not possible as Fatima was totally occupied with coping with her baby and the new pregnancy with twins. But I felt that this had become a condition of Rhaxma’s participation and the reason why they were allowing me some way into their private lives. Frequently in my field diaries I refer to this, expressing a level of guilt that I felt I was not fulfilling my part of the bargain.

Rhaxma was extremely worried about me going to her home and very nervous when I was there. At each stage of the research I needed to spend some time reassuring her that her parents had given permission. The first time I taped an interview she wouldn’t talk at all to begin with. The same happened with the video camera. But in each case she eventually eased up and participated. Talking in a public forum about things that happened outside school and especially talking about things that Rhaxma perceived as potentially in conflict with the home or religious code, was both stressful and exciting for her. At each stage of the research I was expecting Rhaxma to withdraw, or to be withdrawn, and that must have affected how I was with her. I found I was being over careful and this encouraged her clinginess. Reading through my interview transcriptions I find I was also censoring some of my questions and staying on a safe track of topics when working with the group.

Rhaxma's family were very religious Muslims. She attended Qur'anic classes twice a week and this was clearly an important centre to her life. She was very conscious of codes of behaviour that were expected of her as a Muslim girl. She sometimes covered her ears if the others said things she realised were inappropriate. Rhaxma fasted during Ramadan although her mother said she didn't want her to. She said that the mosque wanted her to. Yet she never spoke about her religion or mosque with her non-Muslim peers. At the same time she also avoided friendship with the other Muslim girls in the school and tended to keep away from the other Somali children. She preferred to make contact with her other peers. She was highly sociable and made gradual contact with a wide range of children. However she always wore her hijab and was the only Muslim child in the school to do so. Yet this was the only aspect of her home life that she made public. Even when her mother had a new baby neither her friends nor her teachers knew.

On a school outing to a story telling session at Oxford House (a Somali cultural centre in Bethnal Green) I was struck by Rhaxma's different behaviour. She would never speak Somali at school. However, during the story telling she lit up. She participated in Somali and seemed proud to be able to show her skill to the other non-Somali children there. On the journey home she told me that the story we had heard that morning was one that her mother used to tell her. This day had allowed her a rare opportunity to bring the private and the public parts of her life together. It seemed to me that her rejection of her Somali peers at school was to do with the problems of crossing these boundaries. For her they were part of her private world of home and religion. Her school friends were in a different world that I believe she accessed through television. It was an important window on the host country.

She loved to talk about television and became almost hysterical at each group session. She clearly watched a lot. Talking about television in the group allowed her some possibility of talking about home but she clearly censored much of what she said. She often referred to conversations she had had with other children about films and programmes and it was acknowledged that this was what she talked about most frequently. This was clearly one

major reason to include her in the group and to make her a main focus. However I was also aware that she was adept at anticipating what was required of her in different situations. She knew I was interested in television. And often, almost without my asking, she would launch into a catalogue of what she had been watching over the weekend. It appeared that, like Jima, she had consciously worked out that talking about television would give her an ‘in’ on friendship and attention. For Rhaxma, like Jima, TV knowledge was also a way of avoiding having to talk about more private matters. Of course, her natural interest in the world and her limited access to other routes of finding out also lead her to watching and talking about television.

It became her game to rush screaming at me whenever she saw me, clinging to my legs. If she saw me in the playground she would drag me over to where she was playing, wanting me to join in. At first this usually resulted in the destruction of the game. This didn’t seem to worry her and she would soon be off, playing elsewhere. As far as I was concerned it was disastrous, as it meant observation was extremely difficult. The other children did not want me in that role in their games and also couldn’t cope with Rhaxma rushing in and out of role as she kept me in line. When the situation became too difficult I often took to watching from an upstairs window and then talking to the girls afterwards. This was not ideal. Over time I was more accepted and often joined in the games.

Rhaxma was extremely attention seeking and used her connection with me to gain status with the other children. This was especially so when it came to making the video. Many of the girls in the class wanted to be part of the group and although she was reluctant at first about the use of the camera, she recognised their enthusiasm for it and used it to her advantage. Her neediness both drew me in but also made me overcompensate in favour of the others. It was noticeable, when transcribing tapes of the group sessions, that although Rhaxma made the most noise I often gave priority to the others, thinking that she was dominating. In fact in terms of content she was often underrepresented. The chaos she created acted as an effective shield to real participation.

Her playground behaviour was in stark contrast to her classroom persona. Here she was able to concentrate and work on her own, even when children around her were misbehaving. In class she played the good girl, possibly drawing on the discipline encouraged in Qur'anic classes. Again she was able to use the resources available to her in her home life to meet the different demands of her school life (Gregory and Williams, 2000). In the playground she played out her fantasies. I got the feeling that she was often unclear how she was expected to behave.

The way that Rhaxma talked about her life at home was very worrying. She related, in small, often unrelated, chunks, many complicated conflicts around food and behaviour that painted a very unhappy and conflicted home life. There were clearly problems with eating that the school was aware of and that both Rhaxma and her mother gave different accounts of. Rhaxma said that one of the things that her foster parents had done wrong was to give her pork to eat. She often didn't eat her school meals. The previous year she had not been eating at home. When her stepfather had found the food hidden in a cupboard he and her mother had been furious and they were now making her eat. Fatima was remarkably open about this situation. She also spoke easily about her frustrations at being unable to attend English classes. She was very open with me about how much she resented being at home with small children all day and how upset and worried she was that she was pregnant again, this time with twins. I was very aware of her isolation and frustration at her circumstances. And yet at the same time I found her treatment of Rhaxma very difficult to accept.

Fatima spoke remarkably good English and said that she had learned everything from the television. It was clear that the children rarely had visitors or went out and the little ones were at first terrified of me. It took some time for them to relax and make contact with me and this was usually done through pointing to something on the TV screen which was always on. Ramla, Rhaxma's little sister, often sang and danced along to the adverts. Both her and her little brother were very keen on The Teletubbies.

After the birth of the twins Rhaxma was off school for several weeks helping at home and I became caught in a circle between the school's need to get her back into school, my need to be seen to be separate from the authority of the school but at the same time to help Rhaxma, the family's need to have Rhaxma at home helping with the babies and Rhaxma's need to have some contact with school. I visited the home and arranged to take Rhaxma some work and some books to read. The family were worried that the younger sister would destroy the books. But her mother also agreed that she needed to keep up with her schoolwork. Rhaxma was very pleased that her needs were being acknowledged.

Right from the beginning, with the different accounts she gave of her history and present life, it was extremely difficult to grasp a true picture and I found myself torn between truth and fantasy. For example, at first when she told me that her mother woke her up at midnight to pray each night I was alarmed. After some thought I realised that what was happening was that it was dark when her mother woke her in the morning and Rhaxma thought it was night time. The family were clearly struggling at that time and Rhaxma was used to some degree in the role that she described in her games, as that of the 'slave'. She often looked after her younger siblings and described her weekends in terms of the work she did for her mother. She said that she would watch Live and Kicking, her main source of music news, until she had to 'start work'. The video is quite revealing of the situation at home (see Chapter 10).

In gaining access to Rhaxma I was continually confronted by difficult negotiations about the private and the public. More disturbingly, there were several ethical issues that had to be thought through at each stage. On several occasions I discussed this with the head of the school, as I was so concerned about the situation. It also clearly affected my relationship with Rhaxma and how I approached the research. Quite apart from the practical problems such as the fact that Rhaxma was never allowed to come out with the group or to play with her friends outside school, there were more complicated issues.

For example I never tried to do a taped interview with Fatima and relied on memory and detailed notes. As with Jima, I had to make decisions about the boundaries of the research

role, the responsibilities of the trust I had developed with the family and the often extreme nature of their practical needs. I contacted the health visitor (with Fatima's permission) when she said she was not getting enough help after the birth of the twins and Rhaxma was being kept off school to help. I also tried to arrange for Ramla to get an early nursery place to ease the situation at home, although this was not successful. But it is clearly evident from my diaries and the progression of the group work how important these home visits and interventions were. Rhaxma became much more able to talk about things at home; and our relationship, while always difficult, became more relaxed. The research itself benefited greatly from this. I, on the other hand, had to work at maintaining a distance. I was tempted to go into school to 'check' on her when I did not strictly need to for the research. As I stated above, one of the mechanisms I used to protect both myself and Rhaxma was to try to keep the headteacher informed about my concerns.

I realise that in this account I have only touched on the issue of religion in passing and that this is maybe because I was not allowed, or rather didn't attempt to, get access to this part of Rhaxma's life. Without it, we really do only have a partial picture. Religion formed the third component of her social interaction as well as informing her home life. In the group session, when I asked them to draw the most important things in their lives, the Qu'ran was the first thing that Rhaxma drew although she did this behind her hand and wouldn't show it to the others at first.

In my discussions about television with her mother we talked about the problem of Rhaxma seeing things on television that were in conflict with her religion. Fatima said that she had told Rhaxma to look away from the screen when there was any kissing and that she did this. She did not want her to know anything about sex until she started menstruating. However she was aware of the contradictions. Rhaxma had a television in her bedroom and so all her viewing cannot be monitored. She watched Blind Date and other programmes that strictly speaking would be unsuitable, with her mother and she talked about programmes with her friends. Fatima also talked about the problem of other parents taking a different approach. While I sat there listening to this, I was very aware of the discussion I had had only the day before with Juba's parents. They had taken the

opposite approach and said that they talked about sex, AIDS and drugs with their children from an early age so as to try to protect them with knowledge. When I heard these two accounts on the same afternoon I felt in the middle of a conflict zone and could only imagine how Rhaxma perceived this.

While feeling that over the 18 months of the fieldwork I got to know her very well, there were clearly spheres, particularly religion, I was not allowed to enter which would have affect the ways in which she related to television. The level of fear and her protection of her privacy related both to her personal story but also to the fact of being a refugee (since both are in any case related). She loved television and used it extensively, although not quite as consciously, in her social interactions with her peers. She played the joker and the crazy one in social relations and used TV talk to assist in this. Gaining research access to her, even on a topic as seemingly uncomplicated as her use of media, brought with it difficult moral and ethical decisions, which clearly illustrate the difficulties of separating the experience of media from other aspects of private life. One major difference from Jima is that as a girl, and as a Muslim girl living in a difficult area, Rhaxma was allowed very little freedom beyond the home. Her television referencing and uses, therefore, did not form part of the ways in which she built a connection with the locality but remained centred on close social relations and private fantasies.

In the next section I examine the transcripts from group sessions with the girls and elaborate on points raised here, detailing the dynamics that underlie these interactions.

#### **(v) Rhaxma: through the data**

In this section I want to look at three activity sessions with the girls' group and follow Rhaxma through them. I have chosen to do this partly because my access to Rhaxma was quite different from that of Jima, in the sense that I could not go out and about with her. Most of my contact with her was within school and in the context of the group. In fact the moment at which I suddenly felt I had a grip on her, the moment of 'recognition', after a



long period of frustration and feeling that I was not getting anywhere, came in the second of these sessions.

I am aware that there are several problems in approaching her portrait in this way. Most importantly, as these sessions took place at weekly intervals, I do not know the context in which they are taking place. For example, in the session following these three, Rhaxma refused to participate. I do not think it was anything to do with the group or the sessions directly but clearly something had happened to upset her equilibrium either at home or at school and she withdrew consent for that session although she was there in body. Similar less drastic things would have been happening at the time of each session of which I was unaware. However, the direction I will follow makes sense in the larger context of the portrait I have already drawn of her life and of the observations and other data that I gathered on her.

I will start before the first of the three sessions with a group interview that I carried out very early on. Three clear themes emerged from that interview that continued in the later sessions. Firstly Rhaxma says that she talks about television a lot with her friends.

**Extract 58**

1    INT:            When you are together do you talk about television a lot?

2    ALL:            Yeah

3    RHAXMA:       A lot, a lot. ALL the time

4    INT:            Why all the time?

5    MORWEN:       Not all the time

6    RHAXMA:       Not all the time because if we watch it or not sometimes

7    MORWEN:       It depends

8    RHAXMA:       Sometimes when we are watching films, us two, we watch them and

9                    then we talk about it and we have fun talking about it, the funny bits

10                   [Rhaxma is getting higher and louder all the time]

In fact she emphasises her claim clearly (line 3) but then details it more exactly (line 8-9) to fit in with the group when Morwen demands it. My note at the end of this extract (line 10) raises the second point which I have mentioned before, about the level of excitement that talking about television in school evoked amongst the children. In this group the

excitement was extreme and came almost entirely from Rhaxma. It became an aspect of working with the group that ran through all three of the group sessions I discuss below. Finally the programme that came to symbolise the girls' group for me, as wrestling did for the boys group, was The Power Puff Girls. This played a major part in this interview and caused great excitement. Interestingly Morwen held herself separate from this discussion, claiming that she never watched it. The others sang the theme song with great enjoyment, deriving great pleasure from the image of power that it gave them. In the next section I will be looking closely at this programme and analysing its significance for Rhaxma. This theme also recurs in the group sessions below.

While I have chosen to look closely at only three sessions, the content or themes were repeated again and again throughout my work with them. They simply appear to crystallise in these sessions. From the beginning, The Power Puff Girls theme is in place and Rhaxma is trying to fit into the group. In the first session I asked them to do four drawings. For the first one they had a free choice as to what they wished to draw. An argument started up because Jade immediately said that she wanted to draw The Power Puff Girls. Rhaxma claimed she also wanted to and now thought she wouldn't be allowed to. Jade said she was going to draw only one of them while Rhaxma claimed more ownership by saying she wanted to draw all three. She repeated their names several times, asking how to spell them and also gave out other information about them, in order to confirm her knowledge.

Nyota meanwhile was trying to remember the name of another programme and the others tried to help. At first Rhaxma was silent and then, when it came near to establishing what this programme was, she made a comment to imply that she also knew it but had also forgotten the exact title. However it seemed fairly clear that this was not the case and that she was pretending in order to fit in. This is symptomatic of the struggles for power acted out through TV talk discussed in Chapters 3 and 7. The atmosphere then became quite relaxed and they settled to their drawings. In this atmosphere Rhaxma risked asking Morwen something about her party. The others had all gone to her birthday party that weekend but Rhaxma had not been allowed to. She went on to give an explanation for her absence saying that she had had to stay at home and help her mother look after the twins.

Half way through the session we went to the shops to buy some magazines to cut up for the posters they were going to make about themselves and television. When we returned Rhaxma was beside herself with excitement. The first thing she cut out was a sign saying: “every girl can be a princess” and she stuck this on the poster. Fairy tale characters were very important to her and as we shall see in the next section symbolised certain aspects of her life. Her favourite was Cinderella and she returned to this theme frequently. The talk turned to swimming and Rhaxma said she was not allowed to go because she got ill from it. Morwen supported her by saying that it was also hard for her because she had to wear a ‘scarf’. The removal of the hijab was probably the real issue as Rhaxma’s hair was cropped short and dyed red. She had been very embarrassed to reveal it to me at home. More importantly, however, this was the first and only time that Rhaxma’s religious difference was acknowledged in the group, but now compounded by the connection with swimming.

Then everything changed. Rhaxma cut out a picture of Mulan and held it up for the group. We have discussed this extract earlier in Chapter 7 (iii) (e) (extract 22) but need to return to it here in this related context.

**Extract 59**

- 1 RHAXMA: She’s Moolan
- 2 MORWEN: Mulan not Moolan
- 3 RHAXMA: I call her Moolan
- 4 MORWEN: Mulan is crap, I don't like it
- 5 JUBA: I don't like The King and I
- 6 RHAXMA: What?
- 7 JUBA: I don’t like The King and I
- 8 MORWEN: Nor do I
- 9 RHAXMA: The King and I?
- 10 NYOTA: I dont like Mulan either
- 11 JUBA: Mulan, Mulan Mulan is only when she goes, when she goes training to
- 12 be a fighter
- 13 MORWEN: She becomes like a man
- 14 NYOTA: Yeah
- 15 JUBA: She even cut her hair, she even cut her hair
- 16 RHAXMA: Do you watch it Juba? Did you watch it?
- 17 JUBA: Yeah and she cuts her hair with a sword

Rhaxma mispronounces the name (line 1). Morwen immediately corrects her (line 2). Rhaxma’s actual outsider status had already been established in this session by the fact that she could not go to Morwen’s party and didn’t go swimming. A group feeling had developed, but now we see how precarious this was. Rhaxma’s media choice is rejected by the very friend who, a minute ago, had supporting her and to whom she really aspires (line 4). This is immediately followed by her exposing her lack of knowledge of another programme/film (line 9). This rejection is then compounded by Nyota joining the others in their rejection of Mulan (line 10). Rhaxma seeks clarification because she doesn’t understand what the problem is (line 16). She has not understood that playing ‘girl power’ as in The Power Puff Girls, and previously in The Spice Girls, is different from rejecting being a girl. She is unsure what is acceptable girl behaviour in the host community. Rhaxma has been excluded from the group for offering an unacceptable media character. But later she holds her own and returns to the fray. She offers Mulan up for auction again, although this time she rejects it herself but only after taunting the others with it.

**Extract 60     Field diary**

Rhaxma holds up the picture of Mulan and says “Mulan, the one you hated” and nearly sticks it on her poster but then changes her mind and rejects it.

And later:

Rhaxma returns to the ‘Mulan’ chant, taunting the others

The talk moved back to the magazines and the atmosphere softened as they talked about some of the programmes they all remembered watching when they were younger. The magazines we had bought were all for a younger age group and this allowed the memories to flow on more neutral territory and a group spirit to develop. Rhaxma talked about her little sister watching Teletubbies. The talk moved on quite easily but just before the end of the session Rhaxma again ran into trouble by calling the Jellykins the Jellybabies.

- Extract 61**
- 1     RHAXMA:    Can I have Jelly babies?
  - 2     JUBA:        Jelly babies?

3 MORWEN: Jellykins!

Again Rhaxma gets put down for not knowing the right name. She then moves onto safe territory by declaring her dislike of the Teletubbies, a programme that has frequently been made fun of in the group because it is for younger children. From home visits, however, I knew that she often watched and enjoyed it.

**Extract 62**

1 RHAXMA: I hate Tellytubbies

2 INT: Do you?

3 RHAXMA: Yeah

While the tape recorder was turned off Rhaxma tried to engage the others in a discussion of Sunset Beach, offering it up for auction. She often watched this with her mother when she was off school. As I have mentioned earlier, this was a favourite programme among all the migrant families that I visited. Again she suffered a rejection. The group would not admit to such pleasures, preferring to keep her on the outside.

At the following week's session a similar pattern evolved. Again, Rhaxma was on the outside. Again while everyone else had gone to a party she had stayed at home. Some home stories were exchanged and Rhaxma shared in this a little. But it is when the talk turned to TV that she got really excited. She talked about a film she saw that she had been talking about with other children in her class earlier. Then when Jade was trying to talk about Fort Boyard, Rhaxma became so excited that she had also seen the same episode that she couldn't be quiet. A running battle took off between the two girls each trying to tell the story, Rhaxma almost harassing Jade.

The talk went on with the group sharing several television shows. In between there was a lot of talk about family. Nyota's description of how she had watched a late film in her brother's room appeared to shock Rhaxma. Rhaxma talked about what her parents watch. There was talk about goodies and baddies and who should win. Nyota maintained that the baddies should win sometimes. Rhaxma was shocked. I wondered if this reflected Nyota's family situation. Her father was labelled as a baddie by the (then) Zaire government and

had been tortured and imprisoned. The whole family had suffered. Now in this country they were actively involved in exile politics. She wanted the ‘baddies’ to win.

There was then a dramatic episode in which Rhaxma violently rejected a picture of a woman she considered naked, throwing it across the room. Rhaxma had exposed a value from home about nakedness that was at odds with the group. Nyota made this clear by declaring that she did not consider the woman to be naked, implying that Rhaxma was being very ‘uncool’ and childish. The others agreed. Rhaxma was silenced and the talk moved on. They then sang some songs together. They shared being frightened by some programmes. They shared news stories that had scared them. This developed out of Nyota talking about her father watching the news all the time. Again this is an exchange I have mentioned before in chapter 7 when discussing the news:

**Extract 63**

1    RHAXMA:    Once, yeah, when my aunty came around and my mum was in hospital  
2                    then I heard news and it said, I don’t know, about every time little kids  
3                    go out it’s like someone eats them.  
4    JUBA:        What?  
5    RHAXMA:    I said on the news and they’ve found their bones, yucky  
6    JUBA:        yuck  
7    RHAXMA:    That's why I don’t go off by myself  
8    JUBA:        Sometimes I go out at night to buy something from the shop  
9    RHAXMA:    All by yourself?  
10  NYOTA:       Nah I go I go  
11  JUBA:        With Kojo (her older brother)  
12  INT:          with Kojo?  
13  JUBA:        Sometimes I go by myself  
14  RHAXMA:    You shouldn’t!  
15  NYOTA:       Sometimes I go  
16  MORWEN:    You don't, you liar! (addressing Juba)  
17  JUBA:        I do  
18  MORWEN:    You shouldn't  
19  RHAXMA:    What would you do? Scream?  
20  JUBA:        Maybe I will  
21                   [They are all talking over each other/

This extract continues with Nyota telling how her older brother goes to the shops with her and scares her as they walk along. What interests me about this discussion is the extent to which it was agreed between them that they are and should be restricted in their

movements. They argued that the world was not safe for them to enter alone and that they had to rely on their elder brothers to keep them safe, even when they scared them. It was accepted without question that their brothers could go out and about with relative freedom and did so even when they were younger. So despite the fact that Rhaxma was more restricted the others too experienced geographical limitations and it was something they had in common. The session ended on a high, with them all singing and Rhaxma right in the group announcing, “Hey I watch STEPS. That is cool, I watch that, that is cool”.

The contrasts of this session and the tight line between inclusion and exclusion that Rhaxma walked in the group were continued and confirmed in the third session. This time the activity was different. Instead of taking the whole group together I wanted to talk to each child separately about their poster. I also decided to video some of this for the group video production. I will draw out some of the main threads from these discussions.

In my discussions with Morwen she confirmed Rhaxma’s view of her own social interactions with the group. She talked about how Rhaxma only ever talked about television. She gave two reasons for this. Firstly she said that it was because Rhaxma was interested in the same sorts of things as her. Then she said that it was also because Rhaxma’s mother “probably isn’t like my Mum, watching MTV” implying that Rhaxma therefore needed someone to talk to about this. Both explanations put Morwen into the centre of Rhaxma’s world, a mistaken conclusion that Rhaxma was clearly happy to acquiesce to. Morwen also compared Rhaxma’s freedom to talk with that of Nyota, saying that if Rhaxma was allowed to use the telephone she would be on there all the time talking TV with her, as Nyota did. This was partly a means of Morwen demonstrating her popularity to me, but it also implied an awareness of the restrictions put on Rhaxma and the limitations this put on their friendship.

Later in the interview with Rhaxma, after overcoming some of her fear of the camera, she again confirmed this saying; “I talk to everyone about TV”. Then when asked why she didn’t talk about mosque at all in school she said simply that she didn’t think they would be interested. She was aware of what was acceptable and, like Morwen who censored her

talk about wrestling (see Chapter 7), Rhaxma did the same in deciding what of her home world to allow into school. The difference between the two girls of course was both in the extent of the censorship and in the importance of what was censored in terms of its effect on her inclusion.

Rhaxma then returned to her love of fairy tales. In the previous session she could only have done this in the time that they were sharing memories, and it is interesting that she chose not to. Fairy tales for her were more to do with the present than the past, the themes being highly relevant. She acted this out in games in the playground and on her poster but not in direct talk with her peers. It would have been considered too childish. Her favourite character was Cinderella and as we can tell from the portrait I have already drawn of her life there were some obvious parallels. So she was drawing from her media world to comfort herself in some way as well. I will be expanding on this area in the next section.

Rhaxma was still finishing her poster so she stayed for part of the time I was talking to Nyota, and the rivalry that appeared in the previous session was played out again. I got the clear feeling that they were both vying for Morwen’s friendship. At one point Nyota was talking about playing Sega (line 6) and Rhaxma didn’t know what this was. Nyota was very scathing (lines 9, 12).

**Extract 64**

1 NYOTA: On Sunday I watched 'Kids Say the Funniest Things'  
2 INT: You watched what?  
3 NYOTA: Kids Say the Funniest Things  
4 INT: OK and...  
5 NYOTA: Friday, Saturday um EastEnders. I never watched it the last time cos I  
6 was playing Sega  
7 INT: You were too busy with Sega. It’s like a computer game [Rhaxma  
8 doesn’t know what it is]  
9 NYOTA: You never played Sega!?  
10 RHAXMA: No  
11 INT: You explain it to Rhaxma  
12 NYOTA: You know.....[in a patronising tone of voice]

After this familiar power play they found common ground in talking about the news and being scared by it and then about their enjoyment of adverts, both television-based



discussions. Finally Nyota moved onto her favourite topic, music. I asked how they knew about the bands and songs and Rhaxma claimed inclusion by saying that “EVERYONE knows about them”. Indeed, she went on to demonstrate her knowledge and named the programmes that she watched in order to keep up, even though she didn’t have MTV. Again, after a rough start, Rhaxma had managed to use the resources available to her to create accepted social contact with her peers, even where there was a level of animosity.

To sum up, Rhaxma was learning to identify and select what it was acceptable to talk about. In her circumstances this was a complex piece of social negotiation. She was learning to censor what she knew the others wouldn’t understand or would reject, and this meant leaving out some of the most important aspects of her life: her religion, her past and her home circumstances. She recognised that TV was something that they all shared and that it was therefore acceptable to talk about. She used this to gain access to the group. She recognised that the other girls also experienced restrictions in their geographical movements, although less extreme than her own, and she enjoyed sharing the stories that provoked discussions of dangers that lurked ‘out there’. At the same time she also recognised that there were other social freedoms that connected them in their geographical locality which were not open to her. They went to the park, to parties, to the swimming pool. TV was a window that revealed the outside world for her and even though this was often problematic, she chose to make it her ‘thing’. This was acknowledged by her peers.

However, this series of exchanges puts very clearly into focus the ways in which TV talk operates both to include and to exclude. It raises questions about behaviour and beliefs and offers a way of marking out the acceptable borders of those behaviours and beliefs. A high level of knowledge is needed to participate fully and this requires a commitment. Rhaxma was prepared to run the risk, again and again, of being rejected. She loved coming to the group and as I have said before her level of excitement was almost hysterical at times. It was an opportunity for her to learn a great deal from the others, and she did. Her ability to take the risks needed paid dividends and she was accepted into the group. Her resilience is to be admired.

As we will see in the next section one of the reasons for her excitement about TV was that she was able to use it to reflect her own personal preoccupations. She used it to play out her troubles at home and to negotiate what it meant to be a girl in the host country. Through her TV talk she was constantly confronted with the different worlds that she lives in. Different sexual and moral norms were presented and both she and her family were aware that this is a problem area for her. In the area of memories, however, TV offered her areas of relaxed social interaction both at school where was able to build up enough of a shared memory of child programmes to get by and at home where she watched Italian children's programmes with her mother.

#### **(vi) Rhaxma: through her favourite programmes**

In this section I will discuss Rhaxma's media choices and draw out the ways in which they played a more personal and symbolic role in her life. Her favourite programmes were the cartoon The Power Puff Girls, Sabrina the Teenage Witch, and Live and Kicking. Her favourite fictional character was Cinderella. I start by describing the format of the Power Puff Girls and two sample story lines in order to highlight some of the programme's themes. I then relate these to some of Rhaxma's personal themes. The aim of this section is to explore the personally symbolic reasons why these texts might be important for Rhaxma. Up to now I have concentrated on how she used TV in social spaces. As with Jima I now turn to the texts and their particular relevance for Rhaxma at this point in her life and in her circumstances. I focus primarily on The Power Puff Girls.

The Power Puff Girls is a ten minute cartoon shown on Cartoon Network. The introduction explains that these three five year old girls were created by Professor Utonium. The Professor was trying to make 'the perfect little girls' but as he was adding the ingredients, 'sugar, spice and everything nice', his lab assistant, the monkey Jo-Jo, jogged him and the magic Ingredient X was also added by mistake. Jo-Jo was dismissed but he too had been changed. He became a megalomaniac, called Mojo Jo-Jo, seeking revenge on the Professor and the girls. The Professor became the girls' guardian and they live in his house/laboratory. He is a distant and authoritarian figure and they therefore lack any warm parental, especially maternal figures in their lives. The girls are called Bubbles, Blossom

and Buttercup, one blue, one red and one green. In most ways they are ‘normal’ little girls who go to nursery, play, argue, cry and giggle. However, they also have the capacity, through Ingredient X, to sort out power struggles between good and evil. The Sheriff in the local town has a hot line to them when he needs them to sort out a problem he can’t deal with. The theme is parodic (to adults anyway) of Charlie’s Angels but the main difference is that these girls are non-sexual. Each one has distinct characteristics. Bubbles is sweet and emotional. She pretends to be stupid but is probably the most powerful of the group. Blossom, the red one, is clever, sensible and bossy. She is the leader. Buttercup is brave, often angry and the toughest fighter. She has ‘ice breath’ which can turn her opponents into ice. The theme song goes like this:

The Power Puff Girls  
Fighting crime  
Trying to save the world  
They are there just in time  
The Power Puff Girls  
POWER PUFF!

The programme has been criticised for its level of violence, but both boys and girls like it. In playground games I observed the girls selected the character they played from The Power Puff Girls while the boys often played Mojo Jo-Jo, the mayor or one of the other male characters. Part of the reason for its popularity among girls (and their mothers) is because it portrays the girls as powerful, able to be strong and assertive and not afraid to fight evil. In this sense it could be seen as a source of empowerment for girls (Potts, 2001). As with The Simpsons, it appeals to both children and adults and many of its references and story lines contain material aimed at adults. For example in one episode Buttercup puts condoms in the Professor’s pocket before he goes out on a date (ibid).

The following summaries provide some indication of the typical narratives of the programmes that were acted out by Rhaxma in her playground games. The first episode I will describe starts with a monstrous character who lives alone in the woods outside the town. He shoots anything and anyone who comes onto his property and shouts “Get off my property.” A little squirrel disturbs him while he is sleeping on his front porch and he pursues it to kill it. The squirrel runs into the town and the monster follows but gets

knocked down by a truck. He is only hurt, not killed, and several townspeople try to help him by giving him back the things he has dropped. Each time he goes into a rage, grabs the object and roars at the person who has helped him, “get off my property”. His fury reaches such a crescendo that he starts smashing up the town and anyone he meets along the way. We then cut to the girls playing in their nursery school. Two of them are fighting over a soft toy while the third is reminding them that they had agreed to share. They get a call from the Sheriff and fly into town. At first they can’t work out what is causing the problem and then Bubbles, who is able to talk to animals, meets the squirrel who explains and agrees to take them to the monster, who has gone home. They burst into his cabin and he becomes enraged again. Eventually they trap him and put him in jail. There, he plays his banjo and says that at least he still has that. Suddenly an enormous figure looms over him and grabs the banjo from him saying that it is his. The monster has been taught that it is better to share.

The second episode starts with the Power Puff Girls playing with a little cat in their bedroom. They want to keep it but don’t think the Professor will let them. They hide the cat as the Professor comes into their room but he finds it. He is won over by its charm and takes it away with him, causing the girls much distress. We now see him working in his laboratory and the cat is watching. During the night the cat transforms into an evil being who wants to take over the world and give all power to cats. It hypnotises the professor and gets him to build a machine that will send rays out over the town. The rays are designed to hypnotise cat owners and empower all cats. The girls come to the lab to get the cat but the professor turns on them angrily and locks them out. The cat and the professor set up the machine at the top of the main town building and start to send out the powerful rays. The girls find out and they fight the professor. In the struggle the cat gets knocked off the roof and the professor jumps after it to save it. The Power Puff Girls rescue him and break the spell. They never tell the Professor what happened and they all go home safely.

Rhaxma stated that the reason she liked the programme was because, “they are heroes and they fight the ‘baddies’”. As my description suggests there is a strong moral element here in which good overcomes evil, a fairy tale scenario. This matches Rhaxma’s other more

traditional media/fictional hero Cinderella. But there is a conflict here between active power depicted in The Power Puff Girls and the more passive good of Cinderella.

There is a high level of adult rage in the programme. They roar, strike out and are irrational and unfair. In contrast the Power Puff Girls are sweet but all powerful. They are in control of themselves and yet contained in the home/ laboratory, even though this is not always safe and lacks a maternal figure. In her life Rhaxma had experienced a lot of difficult adult behaviour but she had had no control over it. Put together with my concerns for Rhaxma at home I began to see the importance of The Power Puff Girls in terms of her acting out being powerful over the adults in her life who behave violently and irrationally. In her games she acted out being the victim, the baddie, the robber. She was beaten up, she suffered and yet again and again the games came to some kind of resolution. She escaped, she made friends, she was saved, she moved on to the next game in which she was restored as part of the group. She played with having a power that, in real life, she lacked. Her favourite media characters were powerful girls who also had different ways of dealing with their problems. The Power Puff Girls are assertive, they rely on each other, they have special powers. Mulan becomes strong and cuts off her hair even though in the eyes of Rhaxma's peers, she becomes a boy. Sabrina is a witch with special powers that make her strong. Cinderella is good and through that is discovered and transformed into a princess.

So the themes of The Power Puff Girls reflect the personal themes that Rhaxma is working through: power (omnipotence and impotence), rage, destruction and reparation. These are set in the scenarios of good versus evil, child versus adult, boy versus girl. So, in another light, the rage of the adults can be seen as her own rage, her fury at her personal story and her exploitation. However, at the same time it is an aspect of her personal badness or evil. Coupled with this are her own eating problems which, psychologically, could be seen as her own rage turned inwards on herself. The power of the Power Puff Girls is that of the 'good girl' conquering her own monstrous feelings and repairing the damage that she has caused. But she is left with several unresolved questions. Is she omnipotent or impotent? Has she herself caused the destruction? Did her birth cause the pain that both she and her mother experienced when the foster parents refused to return her and she was kidnapped?

Can she repair it by being the good girl, by helping to look after her siblings and by being deeply religious now, even though she ate the wrong food as a toddler?

Her other media uses and preferences can also be considered in this way. When Rhaxma watches Italian children's TV with her mother, as she enjoys doing, is she revisiting her past in the feelings of comfort that we enjoy when we revisit the familiar things of our past? Or is she also revisiting a place of danger from within the safety of being now reunited with her mother? The role of siblings is also relevant here. Watching Italian TV with her mother excludes her siblings. It confirms her own private history with her mother. Likewise the Cinderella story has also been seen as a story of sibling rivalry as Bettelheim suggests:

No other fairy tale renders so well as the Cinderella' stories the inner experiences of the young child in the throes of sibling rivalry, when he feels hopelessly outclassed by his brothers and sisters. Cinderella is pushed down and degraded by her step sisters; her interests are sacrificed to theirs by her (step)mother; she is expected to do the dirtiest work and although she performs it well she receives no credit for it; only more is demanded of her. This is how the child feels when devastated by the miseries of sibling rivalry. (1979: 237)

Bettelheim goes on to explain how the stories are transformational. Cinderella's triumph restores faith in the child's own ability to overcome these feelings. When Rhaxma chooses the picture of Cinderella and the caption 'everyone can be a princess' for her poster, she is focusing on this aspect. In her games she plays the victim and the slave. She complains a lot about the babies crying, about the hard work she has to do at home and about getting into trouble when her younger sister destroys her school books, but she believes that her 'good' behaviour will help her to prevail.

In The Power Puff Girls scenario, good and bad are split. The evil cat tries to take over the good professor. The bad man from the forest tries to destroy the town. The world is insecure, unwhole. In both The Power Puff Girls and Sabrina, the Teenage Witch, good is encapsulated as separate, a power you draw on to destroy the bad or to make something better. In psychological terms, this separation of the good from the bad is a less mature,

less 'adult', mechanism for dealing with bad experiences. It is a way of keeping the good safe and separate from the bad that might manage to contaminate it. For Rhaxma these programmes offer her a theatre in which she can play out her rages, her impotence and her strong feelings of good and evil.

I have mentioned before the kind of hysteria that often developed when we spoke about television and I stated that I felt this was partly because talking about TV in school felt wrong. It was private activity being brought into public space. But equally it was also exciting because this private space was one in which her personal inner anxieties and pleasures were acted out. It gave them a release but it also felt exposing. When I asked about her favourite TV programmes, she was nervous of stating them. She became breathless and fearful and only after encouragement did she say. She became more and more excited. This was her inner fantasy world we were entering, not just her private social world.

But it was also in the area of defining role models that these programmes were significant and complicated for Rhaxma. She acted out several very different girls in her everyday life: the Muslim home girl, the good English school girl, the English playground girl, the friend, the religious girl. She was expected by both home, school and Qur'anic classes to work hard and concentrate in class. She was always proud when her work was praised and several times she boasted that in Qur'anic class she was ahead of many of her peers. Yet while succeeding in this, the conflict came when she was expected in school to initiate, participate and hold her own with her peers and the staff in a 'western' girl style. In these situations she often verged on over excitement and attention seeking rather than assertion. She wasn't able to combine or resolve the different expectations that she met about being a girl. In the playground she was often wild and hysterical. Sometimes I felt this was because she needed a space in which to act out her demons, and express her anger; but on the other hand what she was doing was an exaggerated model of what all the other children were doing. Playgrounds are noisy places, with a lot of screaming and excitement. The sound track for The Power Puff Girls is also incredibly noisy, as are a lot of cartoons and children's programmes. The behaviour of the child audience in Live and Kicking, which

she watched regularly, is the same. This loudness was not part of her Muslim expectations but was presented to her as a way that children in this country behave, both at school and on TV.

In my relationship with her I often found it difficult to anticipate who I would be meeting and often the different responses were very frustrating. When I wanted her to be open and straightforward, she would be silent. When I wanted her to be active and participate, she would be hysterical. This is not to say that she lived a schizophrenic life, jumping from one culture to another. However, when I put observations of her behaviour in different contexts alongside some of the group TV talk, set out in previous sections, about being a girl, and then look at her own media choices, we have a complex puzzle of role models and expectations. It is this terrain that she is having to negotiate. The Cinderella figure fits closest to the stereotyped Muslim girl. She is modest, quiet, home based and hard working. It also fulfils her need to explore her emotions towards her new stepsiblings. Sabrina fits well with the English school girl model, being sensible and hard working but assertive and freedom loving (not forgetting the special witch powers she has); and this also fits with the ways in which her friendship group expect her to behave. Yet in this show there is plenty that would conflict with the Muslim girl. Sabrina has a great deal of social freedom. She has friends who are boys and she mixes freely. She messes up her room, an episode that Rhaxma returns to frequently. Mulan fits into another form of 'girl power', becoming actively engaged in her own freedom struggle; but interestingly, as we saw in a previous section, this role model as raised by Rhaxma is, to her surprise, rejected by her peers. The Power Puff Girls remain little girls, yet they are strong and good but recognisable and familiar in the small conflicts that they have with each other. They stay together and are essentially home based, play different roles and model different types of 'girl'. Together they fulfil Rhaxma's need to play out her angers and overcome the demons. She claims them all: unlike her friends who choose one or the other, Rhaxma states clearly that she is going to draw them all. Although different from each other, they are one whole to her.



## **(vii) Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the different ways in which I got to know Jima and Rhaxma, through the direct fieldwork contact with them, through analysing the data gathered during the fieldwork and through analysing their favourite television programmes. The aim has been to take a close look at the ways in which these children use television as a resource in negotiating social inclusion and the ways in which TV talk is also a powerful tool in social exclusion. By analysing their favourite television programmes I have explored what particular symbolic resonance these particular programmes might have in their lives and in their particular circumstances. Thus I have sought to relate their social negotiations and identity formations with a more psychological view of the significance of television in these negotiations. Through these programmes Rhaxma is learning about the different ways of 'being a girl' and is re-enacting disturbing events in her life. Jima is learning about family and about survival against the social odds.

**Introduction**

This chapter concentrates on the visual data, examining what they reveal about these children's lives and in what ways they support or question the other data and the analyses outlined in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. In Chapter 6 I discussed the reasons for including visual data and indicated how I approached analysing them. Here I discuss the different visual data and how they are included in the videos. There is a dilemma here. The videos stand for themselves and I do not intend to undermine them by prioritising a written description and analysis (Prosser, 1998 Pink, 2001). However, since the process of making them is as important as the end product there is a need for some explanation of how they were made and some of the main aspects of their production as well as some analysis of the end product and why different elements were included. Because the sound quality of the videos is sometimes poor there are transcripts at the end of the chapter that the viewer can refer to if necessary but these do not form a necessary part of the written chapter. They are there as a support but not as a substitute for the videos.

The first section sets out the structure of each video. I then discuss the different visual data in the order that they were made by the children in the process of the research, rather than as they appear in the videos. Making the posters and booklets about themselves and television were an early activity. The next section discusses the animations that form the major part of the videos. This leads to a discussion of filming the documentary elements and interview clips. I then discuss how the children saw the audience for the videos and how this affected the editing. Finally I discuss using the videos for triangulation.

There is an anomaly that needs to be acknowledged here. Throughout this thesis I have protected the identities of the participants by changing their names. However, in the videos the children present themselves in their true identities. All the parents and children gave permission for the video to be made but in editing the videos and at certain points in writing this thesis I have had to be aware of their ultimate lack of anonymity and have

edited out certain details I would otherwise have included. However, in more public presentations I would not present the sections of the videos where the children introduce themselves using their real names.

### **(i) The structure of the videos**

There are two videos on the CD Rom that is available on request. The first video was made by the boys' group. The structure came out of discussions about what, as a group, they thought were the most important things in their lives and what character on television represented each of these. The final choices were: family (The Simpsons), food (there was no agreement here), friends (The Rock), education (Kenny), television (Will Smith). They had to negotiate these choices. Samuel had wanted to include religion while Jima wanted 'other adults', both choices that were important confirmation of my developing picture of them. Samuel had also wanted to include Trevor MacDonald as representing 'education' (see Chapter 7 (iv) (b)). These were rejected by the rest of the group. Each choice then became the heading for a new section of the video. The animations that tell their individual stories of where they came from and how they came here are included in the first section – 'family'. The other sections include documentary footage shot by the boys and myself in the school, neighbourhood and at Denis and Estava's home. The video ends with some statements to camera and some footage of the poster making session.

The girls' video is less structured and complete. It was more difficult to arrange time to do filming out of school and as a group they were less focused on the production as a reflection of themselves, although they really enjoyed the animation work. Apart from the animations, therefore, the video is more of a compilation of clips than any attempt at a finished product. After the introductory sequence it starts with the joint animation they made about the games they play together in the playground. It moves on to some interview extracts about the booklets they made about themselves and television, some of the text of which has been referred to in previous chapters. Then each girl presents a picture she has drawn about the most important things in her life, a short animation about where

she comes from and where she lives now. These are intercut with more interview extracts. The video ends with footage of the girls going home at the end of school.

## **(ii) Making posters**

Making collage posters using popular magazines was an activity that I used as a vehicle for the children to talk amongst themselves about television and for me to get an insight into the kinds of TV talk that took place. The process of making the posters was what I was interested in and this allowed me to tape the TV talk that took place as part of my data collection. However, I was also interested in analysing the posters afterwards in relation to my growing knowledge of the children. The posters themselves became part of the data.

The boys' group made the posters in pairs and so there was a lot of discussion (and conflict) about what should be included and where it should be placed. It was during the poster sessions that their interest in pop music first really emerged to me. Prompted by the magazines they spent most of the session discussing different stars, holding them up for auction. Acceptance lead to singing their songs or television theme tunes with everyone joining in. They crowded round some of the photos and made comments on their looks and style. They bargained over different photos to put on their posters but it was the singing that dominated. Samuel was central in all this and exhibited a knowledge that surprised me; but at the same time he was also clearly feeling out the others' choices and not committing himself until he felt safe.

My approach to analysing these posters drew on some of the ideas of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and my own knowledge of the children and what was current in the playground at the time. Jima and Denis chose to call their poster 'Monkey Television', predictably focussing on humour and subversion. The centre was dominated by small pictures and commentary on football and football stars. The right hand side was crowded with pictures of pop groups with Whitney Houston prominent at the top but below a dense collection of Jennifer Lopez pictures. On the far left was a section of large pictures from horror films. Closer to the centre were postcards of Homer Simpson and South Park. The

boys worked together on most of the decisions but Jima did all the sticking on the left side and Denis on the right.

Following Kress and van Leeuwen's analysis, the centre, which in this case is also the main focus, is the nucleus, everything else being subservient to it. Interestingly, while football dominates they do not feature a team but individual players; Seaman is placed centrally and labelled as the best goalkeeper for England and Renaldo is next to him labelled as the best footballer in the world. This then could be read as their main shared interest. It refers back to discussions I had with them about football where I noted when and how they used the word 'we' when talking about different national and local teams (Chapter 8 (iv)).

However, the postcards that Jima sticks on of The Simpsons and South Park challenge football's importance. Jima's choice of horror films is part of his challenge to age categories and he again claims knowledge of areas that are prohibited to the others in the group (Chapter 7 (iii) (b)). He even labels the South Park postcard as 'the funniest comedy for adults'. Both from their discussion and the way they placed Britney Spears and Jennifer Lopez it appeared that the former was more unattainable and more desirable. This could be read racially, Jennifer Lopez, as the Hispanic (darker) star being treated more like the girl next door. This was interesting in the context of the group's refusal to engage in any discussion of racial discrimination in the media.

Samuel and Estava's poster is much more crowded. Pop and television stars dominate the top half while football, cartoons and animations fill the bottom half. In Kress and van Leeuwen's terms the top half contains what is idealized and aspired to while the bottom half denotes the practical and down to earth. This would ring true for Samuel in the sense that television and pop knowledge is hard for him to acquire and necessary for acceptance with his peers. This poster also reminded me of Samuel's eagerness to be the news reader (Chapter 7 (iv) (b) ) and in making the videos, the commentator (see below). Each picture is labelled with an opinion. The Power Puff Girls are featured with the ironic comment: 'The hardest girls in cartoon network'. This cartoon had been raised in auction by Samuel as a joke and taken up by Jima who with the word 'scandalous' taken from another programme rejected his suggestion. A girl's choice was being ridiculed and the borders of

age and gender kept clearly defined as we have seen in previous chapters. However, Samuel felt he could include it but only with the ironic caption. The central figure in this poster is Bart Simpson, wearing a cloak, a grimace on his face and almost leaping out at you with sword in hand. Both posters therefore feature The Simpsons but the focus here is more on the naughty boy than the central family figure, thus reflecting the different interests that were clear in other data. Jima focused on the father and the family while the others focused on the boys (chapter 7 (iv) (c)) and their behaviour.

The girls made individual large booklets instead of posters. They had already done some drawings about important things in their lives and favourite TV programmes. Their posters were very much influenced by the magazines that were available. We went to the shop for them to choose. A definite gap in the market soon became apparent. Many of the magazines were aimed at younger children and featured programmes they no longer watched or didn't admit to watching. Other magazines were aimed at slightly older children and concentrated on pop stars and television gossip. The first they viewed with nostalgia and got very excited about while still claiming age superiority. The second they aspired to but didn't feel very comfortable with, especially Rhaxma (Chapter 9).

However the talk that accompanied the making of the posters, the posters themselves and the interviews about them afterwards did provide me with some interesting data. Nyota's passion for music and singing was confirmed and the ways in which she used her knowledge to score points over Rhaxma and put her down, especially if Rhaxma claimed any closeness to her, were also confirmed. However, she can't quite let go of her 'childness' and her music choices are relegated to the back page of her booklet while the front page is covered with Teletubbies and My Little Pony. In the bottom right hand corner is a picture of Cinderella.

Cinderella also appears in Juba's poster, again on the bottom of the last page underneath My Little Pony and Teletubbies. But in Rhaxma's booklet Cinderella is a major feature. She appears in the middle of the first page next to other Disney princesses, Esmerelda and Ariel, and captioned in large letters: "Every girl can be a Princess". I discussed Rhaxma's

interest in Cinderella in chapter 9 but I was surprised that she featured in the other girls' posters. However, the fact that in both the other posters she is almost hidden and on the same page as programmes that have nostalgic, rather than current, significance would indicate more that she is a memory and part of the past than that she is still important. In Kress and van Leeuwen's terms the fact that she is at the bottom of the page would confirm this. The contrast then with Rhaxma's poster was significant.

Throughout the session Rhaxma had been negotiating her choices with the group and finally on the last page her choices are more a reflection of this pressure than of her true desires. The poster and the process of making it symbolised her struggle to know what was acceptable in the group and to negotiate what was not. This was an important process for me to witness but also troubling. Her poster ends with the words: "Joking Juba, Natty Nyota, Magic Morwen", placing the work of the poster right in the middle of the group negotiation and her attempts at inclusion, rather than a reflection of her true choices. This also confirmed my uneasiness with this session in which I felt I might have put her under pressure to conform both to the activity and to the group itself. This is apparent in the video clip of my interview with her about the booklet in which at first she reverts to silence.

### **(iii) The animations**

While the posters focused directly on television the animations were an opportunity for the children to tell their individual stories of where they came from, how they came here and where they are living now. The animations grew out of my desire to explore different ways for the children to tell the stories they had told me during interviews. I had been struck by the fact that none of them had really told their stories either to each other or to the adults who worked with them. In addition many of their preferred programmes (especially the boys) were animations and so I was also interested in seeing how they used this genre to tell their own stories and how the genre could enable them to tell these stories more easily by acting as a means of objectification. My motivation was a desire to explore ways of making children's experiences, particularly refugee experiences, visible particularly in

view of the negative images that are promulgated. In terms of the research I was also interested in finding ways in which practical media work could be used in research.

#### **(a) The boys' group**

I prepared the first session by developing a very clear framework for the boys to work within, much like the writing frames used in primary language teaching. Looking back through the individual interviews I had done with the boys and thinking about the geographical journeys they had made I started to think in terms of three sections: what they had left behind, what they had found and what connections they had made. I then revisited their interviews and selected three snippets from each interview that could fit this frame. In the workshop I presented these to them and discussed with them individually whether these were true reflections. This process freed them from the verbal construction of the story that they found hard and although they made some changes and additions along the way it allowed them to concentrate on the drawings and the animation process. Since the work involved sharing their personal stories with each other for the first time we also had a short discussion about the implications of this and the need to respect each other's feelings in this work. The stories also therefore reflect this social context. Within the frames I had given them they created stories that, while exposing some privacy, were also acceptable within the group.

There are several clear themes that I would like to draw out of the discussion of the animations. These are not the only ones obviously and I hope that the video will allow the viewer to bring their own interpretation to the data. Using video and new media technologies offers the potential of opening up research analysis to a wider participation and my work here is part of a move in that direction (Goldman-Segal, 1998).

Through preparing the drawings for the animations the boys were able to share and compare the details of their memories. These included visual details but also smell, sound, music and language. As they drew they talked about the drawings, comparing landscapes and memories of when they were small in another place. At one point Jima said that Samuel was drawing the wrong kinds of trees and there was a discussion about the kinds of



trees that they remembered and the different climates. Jima's memory of the design of the houses in his street was precise even though he had been 5 years old when he had left. The houses are round roofed, of similar design, with no windows and clouds or smoke above them. The doctor's house is a different colour from the others. Samuel was precise about the size of the hill that he ran down as a child and the shop he used to go to. Denis and Estava spent a long time getting the details of the buildings right with signs and different style balconies in Guinea-Bissau and in Portugal. The street in Guinea-Bissau, they stated in their preparation notes, is sandy. In Portugal there are people in the windows and an amusement arcade hidden behind the hospital (not shown in the video). There was quite a long discussion about the different sounds that they heard in their first countries as compared with London and a level of excitement at their shared memories. The drawing and the sharing in preparation for the animation work enabled them to extend their memories and make comparisons that they had not previously voiced. For the first time they exchanged snippets in their home languages without mockery and laughter and happily added these to the voice-overs.

They all made striking visual comparisons about the physical environments (the buildings, landscapes and the roads) between where they came from and where they lived now in London. They were comparing localities and deciding how these differences would be depicted. Samuel drew the waiting room at Heathrow airport immigration in detail and the row of identical houses in his street. The fencing with spikes is prominent along with the sections of the windows that resemble bars. There is no colour apart from the bright red of the doors. It is the door numbers and the black lines that strike you, in contrast to the openness of the hillside. The hotel where Jima first lived is monstrously big with hundreds of similar windows and one huge red door. It is anonymous, threatening and lacking colour and form in stark contrast with the houses in Addis. Estava and Denis draw their aunt's house in London so clearly that their mother instantly recognised it. The balconies again reflect the different architecture with long communal concrete balconies. The overall impression of all three depictions is grey, a very common image of immigrant stories about this country. Telling the stories in a different medium allowed the boys to evoke and share more sensuous memories of their own immigrant experience.

The next themes I would like to draw out are family, community and lack of agency. The focus of Samuel's story is family and church, confirmed in his choice of religious music. In his planning of the drawing it is people he lists, in contrast to Jima whose extended family is invisible. Jima implies that there are people he says goodbye to but they are imprecise and not depicted at all. He is alone with his father, drawn larger and then larger still once they are in England. What strengthens the emotions of Samuel's story is what is left unsaid. He implies that he had no warning of his departure and we feel the surprise of that by the way he offers no explanation. As with Jima's story we have a strong sense of his powerlessness and exclusion from the factors that have forced such a change in their lives. There is a security in the fact that the church took them to the airport and in Samuel's life here it is the church (albeit a different denomination) that fills much of his life with his father. He shows himself holding his father's hand, unlike Jima.

Jima's memories of Ethiopia centred on childhood stories he had clearly been told by his father and here he decided to add in stories about the dogs biting his father and him playing in the sand with his friend (including a sentence of Amharic). Again as I have mentioned earlier (Chapter 9I(ii)) these stories have the anecdotal style of The Simpsons stories. However, once in London he depicts himself alone, in the centre, on a long and winding road from the hotel to Kings Cross. But he draws two versions of himself, back and front of the same cut out figure. The first wears a tee shirt with two figures on it but when he gets to school he changes into the school sweatshirt. He does not draw his home. While the others mention the school they do not feature it as largely as Jima. All this indicates or confirms to me the importance of school as a centre of his social and emotional life. His depiction of his father also changes. Unlike the other children he drew two versions of his father. The one in England is much larger with a larger head and a distinct face and mouth, indicating his greater importance as the only significant adult in his life here. In contrast Estava and Denis show their new home from the inside with them watching TV. They do not include the school at all. The surprise departures are not their own but their father's. However, they include a map to show exactly where their father is. It is not an unknown place. They portray themselves as more in control of their family

story. In fact they are telling a family history and not their own story at all. Although in the course of making the video Estava says that the most important thing that has ever happened to him is losing his father, they present their story with a sense of confidence and a faith in their future.

Another theme is the future and an overall theme of belonging or inclusion. Jima confirmed his lack of a visible future and the precarious nature of his belonging and his housing. He could not think about where he would be living. In the animation Samuel's story stopped short with his family being reunited but in a subsequent conversation during the editing of the video (and made possible by the making of the video) he expanded on this with a surprisingly angry, alienated and revealing fantasy. He talked about wanting to have a powerful car and a rottweiler when he grew up. He said he would wave at me as he passed and that his dog would attack mine. He also said he never wanted to work as hard as his father had before they came here. However, he was also clear that he wanted to stay here but to be able to visit Kenya. Denis and Estava presented their story with a sense and a voice of confidence and a faith in their future. They were the global travellers I described before in chapters 6 and 8 rather than migrants through force of circumstance. They were also the ones least likely to stay and often talked about moving to the USA.

The difference in the direction that the aeroplanes move is interesting. Jima's moves from right to left and is clearly Ethiopian in its colouring. Samuel's moves from right to left. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) argue that in analysing composition the movement from left to right denotes the movement from past and 'given' to future and 'new'. In these terms which indeed do reflect some of the reality, Jima's orientation is back, he cannot look forward. Despite the difficulties and the lack of choice in the move Samuel's sees his future in this country and is moving forward to the new. The difference in direction of travel in the aeroplanes could be read in terms of confidence and view and expectation of what the future might hold, or indeed in terms of agency or lack of it. While both Jima and Samuel struggled to be and to feel included, Samuel's sense of belonging is the greater. The aeroplane in Estava and Denis's animation is carrying their father away and he remains in their memory not in their future.

Both the discussions that took place during the production and the drawings themselves offered me a much deeper view of their stories and their relationship to their stories. I did control the work to the extent that I gave a frame based on previous work with the group. The genre itself also requires a simple story and the time we had restricted how much they could explore. But I believe these restrictions themselves allowed the children to concentrate on the most important elements and avoided too much deviation which in general talk and group work was a major feature of this group. Being able to view the animations immediately even if in rough form provoked great excitement and satisfaction. The effect on the group was also marked. They became very confident, started acting like 'stars' at school and as a result began to get into serious trouble.

There is a danger of this type of interpretation becoming too reductive, but in combination with the other data it acts at least as a confirmation. In addition and maybe more importantly it touches a deeper level of the emotional relationship these children have with their stories and their environments, both social and geographical.

#### **(b) The girls' group**

The girls' animations also developed out of group drawing and discussion work. They made drawings of themselves, the things that were most important to them and of their favourite television programmes as well as the booklet I have discussed above. They then did drawings of important things that had happened in their lives. These formed the basis of the animations. Since the girls didn't go out and about in the neighbourhood and spent most of their free time at home I lent them disposable stills cameras to take photos at home. These formed the basis of much of the discussion that lead to the drawings of their homes as part of the animations. Rhaxma, in particular, was fascinated by these, especially the fact that she and Nyota had the same bed and bed cover and consequently her bed featured more prominently than I think it would otherwise have done both in her important things and in the drawing of her room.

Much of the work with this group took place in the playground and much of their TV talk was enacted through play so I decided to simplify the personal stories and to include an animation, made by the group together, of the games they played in the playground. So the approach I took to collecting the visual data reflected the differences in the groups, and was adapted to different circumstances and needs. However in analysing the animations I will remain with the three broad themes I outlined above in discussing the boys' animations.

Again details are very important. The first animation in the girls' group video shows the school playground and the most important places in the playground for them: the climbing structure and tyres, the hopscotch drawn on the playground, the wooden animals. They took turns doing these drawings and there were several disputes. The details of design and placement were all important. The animation depicts very clearly what happened in the playground. The family and peer relationship role-play, the teasing, the fights and the resolution are all there as described in Chapter 7. The sudden moving onto another game (which they called the Yellow Brick Road from The Wizard of Oz) is typical. Rhaxma is drawing on a well-discussed episode from Sabrina the Teenage Witch where she "messes up the beds". There are references to 'goodies' and 'baddies' – the robbers. Rhaxma is playing the Cinderella figure who stays at home to work while her friends (her siblings) go out and have a good time (Chapter 9). Nyota is claiming an adult knowledge by being the one in charge of the money and they are all playing with a freedom they don't have, of going to the market together to go shopping. Rhaxma plays with 'escaping' through the window. They were very clear about the ways in which these details of their play should be depicted both visually and through the voice over. The drawings of themselves are small copies of the drawings they did in their other work.

However, in the other drawings and individual animations it is interesting what details are omitted. In the picture of her favourite things Nyota draws herself large, in the centre of the paper and wearing bright colours. Her hair is plaited and rather wild. She only draws her mother and father and not her siblings with whom she has a lot of rivalry. She draws the garden of the house she lived in when her parents were temporarily separated and not

where she lives now. However, in the animation the most striking picture is the one of the building in which she now lives. The number of doors, as she states, stands out and the numbers are prominent (as in Samuel's picture of his row of houses). There are no people shown, in contrast to her picture of Zaire.

Rhaxma is again large and central but in school uniform, depicting her public image. She draws different foods in detail but these are not coloured in and not inviting. Food is central to the conflicts of her life, not as something she enjoys but that brings conflict both internal and external, as we have seen in Chapter 9. In the drawing of her friends Morwen and her hair are clearly recognisable. The story she tells about her life is again interesting in what it omits. There is no mention of living in Italy and being separated and then reunited with her mother. The picture she draws of Somalia is strangely generic, lacking in any detail or distinctness, unlike Nyota's picture of Zaire or Juba's description of Ghana. The images that she might have (either verbal or visual) from stories or pictures have not developed into anything distinct and this could well be largely because of the lack of television depiction of that part of the world. Unlike Jima who also lacks the TV images of his country and must draw on stories his father has told him and memories of his early childhood, Rhaxma appears to have little to draw on. What she says is that it is a 'big country', a description that indicates its importance to her but also its 'unknownness'. The last three pictures are more detailed since they depict her life now.

Unlike the boys who were very definite about their skin colour there is some confusion in the girls' drawings. Rhaxma draws her hijab but forgets about her skin colour. Juba draws herself as a black baby but when she grows up she does not colour her face in although her arms and legs are black. The rest of her family are also depicted as white. Nyota, who in the playground is the first child to pick up and punish any racist inference and has a strong sense of her ethnic identity, also fails to colour herself in. Morwen's father is mixed race but she herself is very fair skinned. In the pictures of her family she draws her father's hair differently but fails to give him a different skin colour. This seemed so surprising that it warranted some thought. They have all gone to some lengths to get the details of hair and dress and environment right but appear to have failed to see their own ethnic identity

clearly. They have used so much colour in most of the drawings that the lack of skin colour stands out.

One explanation might be that Morwen, as the powerful centre of the group and as the lightest skinned, did not colour herself and the others did not want to be different. Another explanation might be that this indicates their lack of clear sense of public and ethnic identity. The boys, aware of street culture, appeared to have more sense of how they placed themselves in the world. The girls, protected from this and interested in pop magazine appearance were maybe less sure of where to place themselves. However, in the context of the fact that most of this group had been at the school for some time and that there was an emphasis on art and ethnically clear self portraiture I would tend, while not ignoring any of these explanations, to opt for a practical consideration. The details of facial features and expression appeared to be very important to the group and they prioritised the clarity of these over skin tone. In fact Juba's drawing of herself would indicate this.

Their depictions of their families again confirmed much of what had gone before but what struck me was the lack of conflict, compared with the boys, about agency. They appeared to accept that they had very little freedom except in their play. They all put family as the most important thing in their lives. However, as in the drawing mentioned above Nyota only talked about her mother and her younger sister. Again this confirmed the sibling rivalry. In the final picture of the animation she is watching wrestling with her parents in a picture of togetherness without her siblings. In the picture of her home she shows her parents watching French TV in the living room while she watches her own TV in her bedroom. Again none of her four siblings are shown, even though the family live in a crowded three bedroom flat.

Rhaxma drew all her family. Her mother is much larger than the others and the whole group is enclosed in a bubble. Below them is the Qur'an, almost as if they are settled on top of it. The fact that she included this was another important step in her relationship with myself and the group. Interestingly the drawings of her home revealed maybe more than she would have intended and confirmed much of what I have discussed in the previous

chapter. She shows herself in a separate room from her mother, who is watching Italian soaps on TV and looking after the newly born twins, while she is separated from her in the bedroom with her younger sister and brother. Her brother is screaming and Rhaxma is trying to block out the noise by putting her hands over her ears. At the same time her favourite programme is on TV and her body is tilted towards that rather than her siblings. Again all three of the Power Puff Girls are depicted with Blossom in the centre. Rhaxma is revealed as quite alone in the midst of intense activity.

Morwen's pictures of herself and her family show them all smiling and happy. Her voice is happy and confident as she talks about them. She includes members of her extended family in the picture. In the animation she says she has no secrets from her family but depicts herself in her bedroom while they are all downstairs in the living room. Like Juba television is prominent. The TV and video are drawn in great detail and she shows her Play Station upstairs in her room. As she says elsewhere in the video, TV is clearly very important to the whole family. But again she depicts herself as slightly separate and yet in control as she always was in the group.

The themes of agency and belonging are again important but are more apparent in what was omitted than from anything concrete that the girls drew. Their lives here were centred on the school and playground and their homes. Perhaps this was because they were younger, and perhaps because they were younger when they came to this country, and the memories were not theirs but their parents. I perceived a sense of separation in the ways in which they depicted and told their stories. This affected how they portrayed or conveyed any sense of belonging. The 'bad things' that happened to Nyota's family in Zaire (The Democratic Republic of the Congo) are accompanied by a tourist style picture of women carrying water and food on their heads that she has seen on TV. During the session she stated clearly that what she loved was, 'my family, my friends, my country and where I am now.' On the surface this appeared quite uncomplicated. However, taken with the desire of her parents to one day return 'home', this is the kernel of one of the conflicts that many refugee families experience (Chapter 8).



The contrasts between the pictures of Rhaxma's past and her present indicate what I have described before, which is the separation between her past and her present, her private and her public lives. The school picture shows the playground prominently, as in Jima's animation, indicating its central importance. The Qur'an class is done in great detail. So the sequence actually tells little about her past and this reflects her fear of exposure. Rhaxma was unsure whether she should draw the mosque class at first. She was afraid it would be rejected by the group but in fact the others took no notice of it and in this context, at least, did not use it to declare her 'otherness'. This was significant for her and for her friendships with them. The process of making the video became a step towards her feeling more included.

Both Juba and Morwen were at a loss when it came to doing the drawings for the animation. They could think of no important events in their lives. After quite a struggle Juba declared she couldn't think of anything and chose to draw where her parents came from. Her drawings of Ghana are therefore understandably distant if carefully executed. She is clearly ambivalent about the country of her parents and while proud that it has such a large football pitch she declares herself absolutely against football itself. The sea also is not inviting but full of dangers. She has watched programmes about different parts of Africa but she connects this with disasters, much as television coverage itself of the continent does. She also appears, despite her parents' stories, not to have too clear an image of the place itself. She highlights her extended family who are here. She is a Londoner, not a Ghanaian.

I wondered if Juba and Morwen's difficulty with this part of the work was because they felt that because they were not migrants in the same way as Nyota and Rhaxma, both being born in this country, their stories were less interesting to me. We talked at fair length about remembering important things that had happened to us all that did not touch on travel at all but on family and personal events; but this provoked very little that they wanted to draw or tell. This puzzled me and raises several questions. Was this because their lives had been fairly smooth and that events moved smoothly from one to the next with little conflict? Was it because they felt their experiences were less important than major events that had

affected the lives of their friends? Was it again a question of privacy? None of these seemed to me to apply and their lack of memory struck me as both strange as well as genuine. In the end Morwen opted to concentrate only on her home which in a sense highlighted her uncomplicated sense of belonging. She talks about her 'personal possessions' almost as a declaration of her belonging and ownership. In the same way Juba refers to the remote control as 'hers', also with a sense of power.

The girls' group was less knowledgeable about the techniques involved in animation than the boys and their excitement was even greater. They were, however, more reticent about the individual sequences while clearly relishing the experience of the group animation. Again the animation work and this discussion of it relates to much that I have described in previous chapters. Firstly the group animation reflected the ways in which television programmes, language and sequences played in and out of their playground games. Rhaxma especially used them to play out her own personal themes (see chapter 9). Each animation reflected their individual themes very clearly. They all showed a social, family-based use of television. They talked about the role of television in connecting them to their countries of origin and how their parents watch other language television to keep these connections. They showed the private and public spaces of their lives and the lack of reference to locality. Their important things centre mainly on the home: family, food, friends, television (all the same as the boys) and pets, bed, toys. For Rhaxma and Nyota, like Jima and Samuel (all refugees) the central place of school in their lives is clear.

#### **(iv) Documentary footage**

The video work itself allowed me an extension of my view of their sense of location and their social lives. This took place both through watching what and how they filmed but also through the talk that took place during filming. It also, in a very practical sense, legitimised my spending more time with them out of school and gave our activities a focus away from myself and the research. I focus here on two aspects of this work: 'performance and genre' and 'a view on their world'.

Performance was a major aspect of the work in both groups and this took several forms. They performed well-known television characters and styles. Jima acted out Homer Simpson and several scenes from South Park. Samuel practised a dance routine they were rehearsing for their class assembly. All the boys acted out wrestling moves. During the filming in the neighbourhood Samuel kept up a running commentary on what was being filmed, acting out the news reporter. When we looked back at the first filming session Jima remarked that this was a little like Playdays in the way the commentary explained everything. They were always conscious of what image of themselves they were portraying during the different sessions and often used television references to explain them. Again the girls, especially Nyota, used the camera as an audience for her dance performances in the playground. In the interviews they asked about favourite TV stars and pop groups in the style of the Live and Kicking interviews. During filming in the playground the girls immediately started acting out a hospital drama scene, taking turns to be the doctors and nurses or the patients.

Another aspect of the filming was what they fantasised could be achieved with the camera in 'fly on the wall' style documentaries. The boys talked a lot about what they could 'get' on camera. They wanted to go and film people kissing in Hyde Park and threaten them with it. Jima wanted to video the barber who gave Jima's father a bad haircut. Denis and Estava were particularly concerned to film in a garage near their house that specialised in 'classic' cars and motorbikes and wanted to claim that they owned the flashiest of the vehicles. The camera gave them access to the garage for the first time and they took advantage of this. They played with the power of the camera in another way as well. Both Estava and Juba used the video as a form of advocacy. Estava made a statement about the need for his great grandmother to have a satellite dish which they had been refused by the Council. Juba demanded to have a pet.

They were playing with the power of the media that the camera represented as well as with different genres. In large measure the familiarity of the form dictated how they used it, although they did also adapt it to their own preoccupations and they were adept at drawing

on different genres. Above all they enjoyed the opportunity to play with these forms and the different images they presented.

Letting them take the cameras out into their locality gave me the opportunity to study what they selected to include in order to portray their worlds, and why. It also allowed me to listen in on what they said about their neighbourhood. Both groups started by talking about the routes they took to and from school. Immediately it became apparent that these were plotted to fit in with the social rather than the geographical environment. The boys, who lived further from the school than the girls, all took routes that would make their journeys slightly longer than necessary. They said this was to avoid particular characters but in reality it also avoided the drug dealing centres that were a feature of the area. Interestingly they did not say this directly.

The girls' group also filmed their journeys home. Juba and Morwen talked about the flats they were afraid to walk past and they were clearly nervous when they walked past a group of teenagers. Nyota and Rhaxma lived just over the road from the school and even though Nyota took the opportunity to climb a tree outside her flats there was still a sense of having to get home quickly. This feeling was heightened by Rhaxma's stepfather's annoyance at her being late home even though this was only by a very few minutes.

As I stated in Chapter 7(iv)(b) there was much less sense of the girls being part of the neighbourhood and an absolute sense of going directly from one place to another with as little deviation as possible. The only detour I was able to make was to the local sweet shop with Morwen and Juba and then we returned to their heavily secured flats.

By contrast the boys claimed to be the local experts. Both Samuel and Jima mentioned people they saw on a regular basis and Samuel wanted to film a dog that barked at him every morning. Jima was able to tell me several stories about people and places we passed, confirming my view that he spent a lot of time out and about. He commented that he had lived in the area for five years so he knew it well and people there also knew him. He took great pride in this ownership. The chip shop owner, for example, said he often gave Jima free chips because he had once returned an extra 50 pence he had given him in wrong

change. Samuel remarked that one of the things that struck him when he came to this country was the number of food shops and pubs and these were a major focus of their filming.

There were also interesting stories about different buildings: a hotel 'where tourists stay' and where they had tried to get in to 'have a look around', a new television station building, where they went to watch an external screen showing the broadcasts. Jima at first stated that refugees stayed in this hotel. He described them in a rather superior fashion as people who didn't know where to go or what to do, clearly gaining status from the fact that he did know these things. It was from this that I gained the feeling of how well located the boys were in comparison with the girls. Their choices also revealed a lot about them both as a group and as individuals. Simplistically, Jima was again interested in the social relations and the subversive ways of putting one over. Samuel was the newscaster and the serious commentator while Denis and Estava went with the good times and the cars and the girls.

The boys became quite confident using the cameras. The girls had a greater tendency to ask permission from an adult before they would film, asking me to condone their choices. However, there were also several technical hitches such as the mikes not being turned on or zooming so fast that in watching the footage you felt sick. All these we talked about afterwards when we watched what they had filmed. The boys were very aware of the technical problems: the wobbly shots, too much movement. They made various comments that related what they had filmed to what they had seen on TV. At one point a police siren was on the sound track and one of the boys said it was like filming New York. They were already talking about what should be included in the final cut and selecting all the more subversive images and the ones that made them laugh.

## **(v) Audience and editing**

The video footage needed to be pulled together somehow and the children themselves needed to think about who the audience was going to be. This became a really difficult

concept for them to grasp. All the boys felt that it was for themselves and their friends. They wanted the video to show or reflect their lives but primarily it should be funny. When they realised that teachers would see the video they had to address different considerations. The possibility of it becoming a form of advocacy was raised. They all said that it should show teachers what they liked to do outside school and that this might influence what they were allowed to do in school. The title they chose reflected this concern: 'Children's Lives or Teachers Should Know How we are at Home so they can Treat us Good at School'.

As I set out in Chapter 6, there is in all this a tension between the different reasons for making the videos. Firstly I wanted to explore the ways in which using visuals would reveal more for the research. Secondly it was a personal and a group portrait that they could keep after the research was over; and thirdly the video was to be a means of including the children's voices directly in presenting the research. It was in the editing that this tension showed itself most clearly. The rough footage needed to be reduced, selections made and for a finished product of some kind to be fashioned. Ideally this was to be done in collaboration with the children.

The animations presented no problem. The selections had already been made and the children themselves had formed the stories. It was simply a matter of speeding these up. The problems lay in the video footage. The boys only wanted to include the 'funny bits'. Goldman-Segal (1998) remarks on a similar difficulty she experienced and the frustration of not being able to get the children to engage with the material in a way that would reflect the whole project. They kept selecting clips that had nothing to do with the purpose of the project but that showed a social and amusing incident that happened along the way. This matched my experience of discussing editing with the boys. Their priority was to select all the 'funny bits': where someone picked their nose, dribbled jam, burped, made a joke.

There were interesting discussions about some sequences. For example they initially wanted to include a sequence in which Jima demonstrated how to get a free phone call from a telephone box. Finally they censored this as it was against the law and therefore could incriminate them. The other factor they took into account was that it also showed

cards advertising prostitutes. While they wanted to include these out of bravado and because their peers would find it funny they were clearly conscious of the adult audience and what reaction this would bring. While agreeing that it was important to include the funny pieces, this could not be the only criterion and would conflict with my need to be able to present a finished piece that would reflect the research to an outside audience. So the end result is an uneasy mix of their selections in what they chose to film at all, selections they made from the footage as a group and my decisions on how this should be presented.

Editing also presented a logistical problem both because the edit suites were a journey away from the school and because it is a time consuming process. Unfortunately time ran out for the girls and they played no part in the editing. In fact their video is still in rough cut form and still remains to be tightened, re-edited and titled before it can be shown more publicly. The boys completed a paper edit together during which we came to a broad agreement about what should be included. During the holidays I was able to take Jima and Samuel to the editing suite. This was housed in old ramshackle premises and Jima was clearly very disappointed. He had expected a smart television studio type environment and for him this seriously downgraded the work they were doing. Again the fantasy of the power of the medium had influenced his vision of his role in the process. The poor premises reduced the power he felt the video work gave him and in a very definite way turned him off the process and he was reluctant to come again after this.

Finally the boys selected the music. They brought the music for each animation from home and I discussed this with their parents. Samuel and his parents chose a religious piece in Swahili. Jima's is a popular song from just after they left Ethiopia. I bought this after discussion with Jima's father as they had no CDs at home. Estava and Denis's is a modern, upbeat new Portuguese song. Each reflected their realities and image. The other music they agreed as a group. Wild Wild West (Will Smith) was a major hit at the time and they had spent a lot of the group work time singing it so this became a theme. They selected Jennifer Lopez' song, If You Had my Love, which deals with trust and truth for the section on friends. They chose a rap to go with the education section but Samuel was vehemently

against this and when I bought it I understood why. It contained both lyrics and swear words that with the audience (especially their parents) we had in mind would not have been acceptable. I played it to them and they had clearly never really taken the lyrics on board and were embarrassed listening to it with me in the room. They agreed it would not be suitable although Jima was keen for me to give it to him!

#### **(vi) Triangulation**

Finally, I showed the videos to some of their friends in Years 4 and 6 and discussed with them whether they appeared to be true reflections of the children in the group and whether they in some way represented their own interests in television. In general the children simply accepted the videos and said that they thought they were 'good'. I would have needed more time and a slightly less direct approach in order to have facilitated a deeper discussion. However, some of the Bangladeshi children did raise the issue of what films and television they don't talk about at school and about the fact that they don't talk about mosque. This indicated the potential for using the videos to promote wider discussions among children.

The boys' parents were very interested. Samuel's father was concerned that making the animation might have brought back bad memories for Samuel and asked a lot about how I had handled these sessions. This prompted me to ask more questions and Samuel's story was suddenly, so late in the day, revealed as being much more complicated than I had ever been lead to believe. His father was reassured by our discussion and wanted to know if Samuel was good at making videos and where he could learn to edit and develop skills in this area. This was particularly bizarre considering his own ambivalent attitude to television and his religion's objection to it. The other parents all had comments to make, but the main achievement of this process was that they all felt included in the process and were thrilled to have the video.

The Head of the school asked me to edit out a short sequence in the boys' video that included a playground fight. She too was interested in what was omitted from the



children's individual stories. However, one of the comments she made was that the girls' video portrayed Rhaxma as a very different child to one she knew. For the first time she saw her confidently interacting with her peers and joining in the games. She had only seen the good schoolgirl that Rhaxma presented in class.

## **(vii) Conclusion**

This chapter has set out the ways in which I used visual work both to generate data during the field work and as a form of triangulation and confirmation of other types of data. The posters were a way of gaining closer access to the TV talk of the groups. The animations gave me access to a different type of data that informed both my understanding of their stories and the role that television plays in their identity formation and sense of belonging. Using the video cameras out and about allowed me a different view on their relationship with their locality and another view on their sense of place. The videos also acted as an invaluable form of triangulation, provoking me to look differently at the data.

However, each time I showed the video to the children as I progressed with the editing, I was aware that I was increasingly showing them a reflection of how I saw the work with them rather than a reflection of themselves in my research. In analysing the videos the stories that were not told began to echo through the visuals and the narratives. The videos reflect what they have chosen to portray of themselves. They tell the stories of children who come from different places, who use television forms and narratives to make connections between friends, family, institution and locality. But they also tell another story and that is the story that I have constructed. If you view the different data as different mirrors, then the visual data discussed here becomes like a hall of mirrors in which the children have portrayed themselves and others and in which I portray them.

## **PART 4**

### **CHAPTER 11 CONCLUSION**

This conclusion looks back over the journey of this thesis. It sets out my starting point, how my questions developed and the nature of the fieldwork. It then moves on to highlight the main underlying theme that I have explored through the analysis of the data. It outlines the main research findings in relation to that theme. Finally it explores some of the unresolved issues and suggests some implications for future research and development.

#### **(i) Hypothesis**

The working hypothesis from which this thesis stemmed, ran as follows. Children use television and TV talk in processing and building their social worlds and in the formation of their identities. Therefore, where children are refugees/migrants, television becomes a site of social negotiations across cultural differences. Increasingly television is used to keep in touch with the country/ies they have left and to maintain cultural contact with those places. Television talk becomes a significant forum through which children negotiate how much they are included in the host society and how much they have to, or choose to, maintain a separation.

#### **(ii) The research questions**

This hypothesis led to the formulation of two key research questions (Chapter 5).

##### **Question 1.**

Children use television in processing and building their social worlds and in the formation of their identities. Where children are refugees/migrants, television becomes a site of social negotiations across cultural differences. This does not happen in cultural isolation. In what ways, therefore, does TV talk form the basis of cross-cultural social relations between children of primary school age?

My research questions developed in two ways. The first question built from child audience research in Media and Cultural Studies and from the Sociology of Childhood. As I set out in Chapter 3 the Sociology of Childhood sees children as active agents in their social worlds. But the ways in which children or childhood are conceptualised will depend on the historical, social and political context at the time. Childhood itself is seen then as a cultural construct within which children have agency. How much agency they have, what forms this takes and indeed whether such a possibility is acknowledged also depends to some extent on this context. Child audience research within Media and Cultural Studies largely shapes this view of children as active participants, seeking to re-examine the relationship between children and television and to move away from views that privileged the text. The relationship between text and reader is seen as more complex, involving several, often conflicting, factors: the texts (the programmes themselves), institutions (of media but I would also argue of the social and political infrastructure), social relations (including family, friends, locality), and the viewer (including the viewer's private motivations and 'themes'). It is the interrelationship between these factors (demonstrated through TV talk) and the role the resulting dynamics play in the formation of identity and social relations that is the central concern of Question 1.

However, the main difference with this study is that it has placed these issues into the very specific context of the social worlds of refugee and migrant children as they mix with their peers from other backgrounds. It is the ways in which TV talk forms a shared space among children within which the negotiation of difference takes place that is the centre of discussions here. In analysing different forms of TV talk (Chapter 7) I attempted to examine the ways in which TV talk acts as a safe platform for the negotiation of multiple differences. I then moved on to examine the specific ways in which those differences play out for refugee and migrant children (Chapters 8 and 9) in this space.

## **Question 2.**

Increasingly television is used to keep in touch with the countries refugee and migrant children have left and to maintain cultural contact with those places. Television talk becomes a significant forum through which children negotiate how much they are included or choose to be included in the host society and how much they maintain a connection with

other societies. In that case what role does television play in the formation of identities and the creation of a sense of place/belonging and community for migrant /refugee families (especially children) in this country/community and with the country/community they have left?

The second question built from debates about globalisation (Chapter 1) and concerns about the loss of the local in an increasingly globalised world, reflected by increasingly global media. Considering this in relation to different, quite conflicting, thinking about migration (Chapter 2) brought issues of belonging and the possibilities of different and multiple forms of belonging and new multiple identities to the fore. It was the role of media in these negotiations of global difference and identity in the lives of ethnic minority youth that was the concern of Chapter 4. This brought the question round to how refugee and migrant children (and their families) use television and TV talk to negotiate issues of identity and belonging not only in the micro, as addressed in Question 1 but also in the macro.

Chapter 8 addressed the complex relationship between the immediate, physically close, social relationships and those equally powerful relationships built across distance in the everyday lives of the children in the study. The children read the programmes they viewed within the real local and global contexts of their lives. The meeting of cultural difference, increasingly negotiated at local level among children in their everyday friendships, was also played out in other relations. Within the home there were generational differences that were negotiated through the different television choices of the children and parents. With their friends they made allegiances that might differ from ones they might have made with their family. Through television they gained views of the country they had come from that confirmed what they had been told or remembered. On the other hand 'back home' was also changing and television sometimes offered them a view that conflicted with what their parents still maintained. These issues were discussed in Chapters 4 and 8 along with the specific role of the news both to inform and in some cases to remind of past traumas and resurrect fears. But these realities were also part of the developing understanding about the world they lived in and their places in it.

### **(iii) The fieldwork**

The fieldwork was based in a Primary school in North London that has a substantial number of refugee and migrant children. I combined ethnographically styled methods with more participatory methods using practical media and art activities focusing on a small number of children within a broader framework of their friendship groups, peer contacts, families and geographical locality. I spent eighteen months observing in the school playground and in the classroom, carrying out interviews with children, families and staff and working with the focus children. The focus children were refugees but their friends came from many different backgrounds, some from longstanding settled migrant families, some recently arrived, others from the host community. This was therefore an in depth study of particular children in a particular location at a particular time aimed at gaining a detailed understanding of the workings of television in their lives.

### **(iv) The main theme**

The underlying theme throughout the thesis was that inclusion and exclusion and the multiple avenues for the different ways that these were conceived and negotiated. Children want to be friends with their peers at school. Certain symbols will identify them with a particular group and will separate them from another. At some point they might be rejected by their friends and have to either fit in with others or win back their approval. Within school their experiences might or might not be acknowledged and how they are treated will either make them feel set apart or members of a larger community. At home they might engage in activities that their school friends would not understand but which make them feel part of a family group that offers a different kind of emotional support. When we come to the term 'community' things become even more complex. The localities within which children live are made up of several different communities according to ethnicity, class, length of residency, reason for living there. How children determine and understand the geographical local and in what ways they feel they belong will also be negotiated, depending on these factors as well as others.

Meanwhile they will also belong to a global community. This can be located in the country of origin but also in other countries, forming a diasporic community. On an international level certain countries and regions are richer, more powerful, or more exotic or less 'other' than others. Some are more included in the global community than others. Many of the world's migrants come from the poorer countries that do not have a stake in global media representations. This too is a factor in negotiating the different levels of inclusion that are demanded today. Finally inclusion and exclusion is altered by what you feel inside. This is partly socially determined but also will depend on your own personal story and how you are working it out in relation to the social. These layers of inclusion/exclusion represent different aspects of the local and 'global commons' and have powerful implications for individual and communal feelings of belonging and for participation in the wider society.

In these many layers of inclusion and exclusion media play a powerful role and talk about media is a platform on which inclusion and exclusion are enacted. It is this relationship between TV talk and negotiations of different kinds of inclusion and exclusion that form the core of this thesis.

## **(v) The findings**

Looking back over the process of this thesis the findings are caught in the spaces in between what I read or what the children said or did. I would like to begin here with some of the key phrases that lead me through the process of building this story. There are several key phrases from Part 1 that remain in my mind and that have resonance with the data. Sreberny (2000) describes the process of arrival and settlement as one of 'looking around' and this absolutely sums up what many of the children were doing through their TV talk. Morley (2000) describes living with several cultures as being 'multi-domestic'. This encapsulates the ways in which the different personal and domestic lives of other children met each other in culturally different domestic lives.

The data are filled with phrases that I have puzzled over or that have surprised or touched me. They represent some of the different aspects of the fieldwork and analysis and have come to symbolise the process of getting to know the children. Working with Rhaxma was a process of recognising what was left unsaid, recognising the gaps and questioning them. When she said she “talks to everyone about TV”, the bigger question of why she didn’t talk about anything else hovered in the air. When she said “Somalia is a big country” the emptiness of the description demanded an explanation. When Nyota stated the obvious (“they watch French channel ‘cos they speak French”) I was forced to question my own assumptions and match them with her own. Estava and Denis reflected my own analysis of them as world citizens by stating positively that when they came to England they were “meeting a new world”. But underlying their story were also fundamental dislocations. It was the implications of what was said, done or made that filled the analytic space. When Gul asked if I “was police” I was sent off onto a whole new understanding of the enormous importance of the news in her fragile formation of identity and belonging. In the same way when Jima softly stated that he never thought about the future the implications of that statement informed much of my understanding of his motivations in being the TV expert. Finally this thesis also explored the passions of television. The ways in which Jima was preoccupied with family in The Simpsons or Rhaxma explored power and girlhood through The Power Puff Girls is at the heart of the relationship between children and television. The findings I set out below therefore resound with these words, phrases and impressions.

(a) Television acted as an important shared space where little else beyond school was shared and where continuity of place and relationships was fragmented or fragile. However, television, television knowledge and television talk are not neutral. They carry specific representations of the world and discourses of identity. Mainstream television is predominantly mono-cultural and in the main does not represent the worlds that refugee and migrant children come from. But different children will read the texts differently according to their own personal preoccupations and specific histories and cultures. The children in my study used talk and play about television as social currency and they

worked across their differences towards a shared reading of their most popular programmes. They developed set rituals and areas of required expertise and knowledge that became shared histories. Learning these rituals was crucial to a child's inclusion in playground life. The refugee and migrant children in this study rapidly learned the importance of television (and its rituals) and actively used it in order to be included and to gain social recognition. Many of them were already familiar with some of the key programmes and were able to utilise this knowledge immediately on arrival. Television knowledge, therefore, served as a symbolic resource that these children learned to negotiate, helping them to make sense of the world and their place in it. They used it to develop ways of living with multiple cultures and of negotiating different cultural spaces.

**(b)** Television was also a place in which these children learned what was not acceptable with their peers and the wider society. So while acting as a place of inclusion it was also a powerful force for conformity and for excluding what was different. Children learned what aspects of their personal and home lives, cultures and non mainstream media choices they should keep private. They often censored or excluded the most important aspects of their home lives from everyday social interactions outside the home. In fact they often used TV talk to protect their private lives. For example, while Jima used television to build bridges across sections of the broken narrative of his life he also used it to protect or build defences against entry into the parts that didn't fit into the accepted norms which surrounded him.

**(c)** At the same time television brought new ideas into the home leading to family tensions both for the children and the parents. The families in my study used satellite and cable television to maintain contact with the previous place of residence and to build new relationships within the diasporic community in this country and internationally. These new global media possibilities meant that the children in my study were faced with new complex cultural choices and negotiations. They had to decide how much to invest in which type of media. Their choices would have implications for how much they would or would not be included in their ethnic, 'home' or host communities. This in turn has implications for their identity formations and sense of location and how they would



participate in the wider society. They had to negotiate not only the formation of new identities but, in a way not envisaged before satellite, simultaneous multiple affiliations and identities.

(d) News media had a particular importance for the refugee and migrant families in my study. All the families prioritised access to satellite news channels. The children talked a lot about news informally with each other in the school but rarely formally as part of the school life. For children who had experienced conflict it triggered strong feelings of insecurity. Talking with their peers allowed them to relate their experiences to those of others and for them to understand that they were not alone.

(e) Since television is primarily a visual medium it allows participation in TV talk that is non verbal and this therefore offered immediate access to those children who were not confident in the spoken English language. Singing, dancing, miming, drawing and filming became powerful tools of communication between the children who used TV as their shared point of reference to facilitate understanding. Using visual data built from what the children were already doing and was therefore an obvious route to building participatory research in studies about media. In addition it was a way of gaining access to their worlds and facilitating different kinds of talk and therefore data. It was an invaluable form of triangulation that allowed greater participation by parents and families.

## **(vi) Unresolved issues**

Inevitably I am left with many unresolved issues. A close study of this nature never has finality as such. It is always one view of a process and raises further questions. Any implications or wider relevance for the findings set out above should be viewed in that light. But in this I refer back to Geertz (1973) and the description he gave of the achievement of ethnographic research. The skill of research that looks at the details of everyday life is to be able to distinguish between the “wink” and the “twitch”. If this is achieved then the knowledge gained is valuable in informing future studies and the cumulative effect is what gains greater significance. Of course I would like any difference

this study might make to be more immediate but it is in the nature of such research that it is part of a larger process.

Events in the wider world are bound to influence and shape the data, analysis and findings. During the fieldwork the Kosovan war was taking place. I was writing up during September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 and the following weeks of the war in Afghanistan. The war between Israel and Palestine has been a constant factor. If I was in the field during the present World Cup, or during an election, or after the opening of the Channel Tunnel Rail link in Kings Cross the data might have highlighted different issues in different ways. My aim in spending a long time in the field and drawing on different data gathering methods was to work towards some constants and some insights that would not substantially change but that recognised the situated variability of the data.

## **(vii) Implications for future research and developments**

I had planned at this stage to look back and consider how I would have done things differently. However, that would be counter to the nature of the research that I undertook. I needed to move and shift with what was around me. Of course, the enormous process of learning both about research and about the research questions I was investigating mean that I would have done things differently; but we don't ever relive the same time as in Groundhog Day. I prefer to consider where I or I hope others too might go from here.

**(a.1)** My original idea had been to compare two contrasting schools: one with the mixed intake of the school I did enter but also another with a majority white British intake where migrants and refugees would be in a distinct minority. It would be an obvious next step and directly relevant considering the government's policy of dispersal. In addition my teaching experience tells me that a school that contains only two major ethnic groups would offer a different picture again, maybe offering insights into the ways in which television might operate strongly to define and separate these two groups.

**(a.2)** During both the fieldwork and analysis I discussed my work with people from different backgrounds and cultural experience. Their insights were invaluable but it was frustrating that I was working alone. Other researchers in the same sites, able to share data and offer different perspectives would have enriched the study and highlighted nuances that have escaped me. It would be a luxury indeed to embark on a study that not only took place in different settings but brought different cultural perspectives to its processes and analysis.

**(a.3)** In any future research of this nature I would incorporate the use of video more directly not as a one off production but one that was central to the data gathering. Involving the children in a series of productions would allow them to take control of the process, especially the planning and editing. From the experience of this thesis I believe that such a process would be a powerful way of collecting different layers of data but also of empowering the participants to present and own their own stories of themselves.

**(b)** If television can operate as a shared intercultural space for children this has implications for the school curriculum and for teacher training. This has several aspects.

**(b.1)** Firstly while news was an important subject for TV talk it hardly existed in the formal life of the school. At a time when citizenship is being put forward as a core part of the school curriculum this gap seems particularly strange. One answer was offered quite by chance by the Head of my daughter's school. Shortly after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, I asked her how the school was addressing the news. Her reply surprised me but I have discovered that it is not unusual, especially in schools that do not reflect a diverse cultural and religious mix. She said that that was not the business of the school and that she didn't want to upset the children. The best thing was to carry on as usual. The fact that the children were watching it and talking about it outside school, that most people and institutions in the world were completely preoccupied by it, that the world was changed by it appeared to be irrelevant. The school, in her eyes, was a separated entity of seclusion and (false) safety.

My feeling was that in fact she did not know how to address it and so chose not to. In a situation where the majority of teachers are still from predominantly mono-cultural backgrounds this becomes an issue for research and of preparation, awareness and training.

**(b.2)** Secondly, it would be easy to say that because TV talk is a potential shared space and because it facilitates talk about often difficult issues, television should be incorporated more into the curriculum. The present attitude is often to go in the other direction. For example, a visiting storyteller to the school was horrified by my research and said that her work was important and valued by the schools she worked in because she aimed to counter the influences of television. I have also encountered teachers who have stopped children from talking about TV at class news time saying it is not 'real' life. There is enough evidence here to counter this censorship. However, it would seem to me to be counterproductive merely to hijack TV talk, taking it from the informal interactions within the school to pull it into the formal space of the curriculum. That is not its role or its strength. Again it is a matter of awareness and training. I learned a lot from talking about TV with the children that would have informed my teaching practice and approach as well as my knowledge of the children. It is the ways in which the informal can inform the formal that is important here and worthy of research. As the boys' video title states, "Children's Lives, or what teachers should know how we are at home so they can treat us good at school".

**(b.3)** The video work that I undertook with the children was invaluable for the research. However there were also factors that had curriculum implications and could inform ongoing research. The video work allowed the children to express themselves and to share their experiences in a way that would promote both literacy and citizenship skills. The level of their competence with the technology after a remarkably short introduction also confirmed the possibility and the need to incorporate practical media into the primary school curriculum (Bazalgette, 1989). In addition this study has confirmed the importance of visual communication and the visual skills that children are building that are necessary

in today's media world. Visual literacies are still only on the margins of formal learning and need to be incorporated more fully.

(c) While children living with two or more cultures are often seen as disadvantaged this thesis presents a different picture. During the fieldwork I sometimes watched the playground from an upstairs window. During playtimes children moved in mixed groups across the space, forming and reforming in different combinations. This contrasted starkly with the picture at the end of school. Then groups of parents would wait for their children each in their separate ethnic group with little interaction between the groups. The children would emerge and leave the school thus separated. In contemporary society where economics, communication and everyday life require the ability to move across cultural boundaries, how are we supporting children in maintaining and developing the skills they naturally display in the playground? This has implications for research, the curriculum and training of teachers and support staff. As Campbell (2000) states, "having multiple cultural identities is a natural response to living in a culturally complex cultural environment, and developing the ability to adapt to different cultural contexts may be one of the key learning areas of the curriculum of the future" (ibid:38).

Finally, looking back through the empirical data presented in Part 3 and comparing it with much of the theoretical background in Part 1 there is little evidence of a celebration of the global but rather a refiguring of different 'locals'. Moreover the adaptations "on the ground" are not happening in a vacuum. The personal changes, negotiations and experiments are moulded by existing structures and institutions that are slower or more unwilling to change. As Hey (1997) stated in relation to girls' friendships "power is not so much transformed as intimately refurbished". The intimate relationships of power and agency between the particular children in this study and television become a window on the ways in which children live with the complexities of globalisation, migration and the meeting of difference in their everyday lives and social structures.

At this particular time discussions about migration and refugees dominate political agendas in Europe and worldwide. Research projects about them receive funding while practical funding that would alleviate their circumstances is denied. Increasingly they symbolise our uncomfortable relationship with the spread of globalisation. They reflect sections of the West's riches and political power back to us with questions that remain unanswered.

## **APPENDIX        TRANSCRIPTIONS OF VIDEOS**

### **(i) The boys' group video - Children's Lives**

#### **Introductory sequence**

##### **First animation**

My name is Evans (Samuel) and this is my life story.

I used to live in Kenya in something like flats just across the road from the shops.

After school my bus used to leave me at the top of the hill. I used to run down the road to my house.

We used to go to my uncle's every Friday and watch TV.

[television announcer speaking in Swahili]

I was sleeping.

And the next day my Dad told me we were going to London and then we left that night. Our church took us in the van and we went in an aeroplane to come to London.

We came to Heathrow in the morning and we waited in a small room and got biscuits.

My aunty came to pick us up and we stayed there a little while.

And then I came to Kings Cross.

Then my Dad started looking for a school and we found Horton and I came here.

Now all my family is here.

##### **Second animation**

My name is Nahom (Jima) and this is my story.

I lived in Adis Ababa in Ethiopia.

The doctor and his dog lived next door in the orange house.

At night the dogs barked the bark.

Woof woof. Woof woof. Woof woof. Woof woof.

One day my dad was walking over and a dog bit his trousers.

[Growling]

Me and my friend we always used to play in the sand

[same sentence in Amharic]

When everyone was saying goodbye I thought wait, what's this?

So I asked my Dad and he said, 'Wait and see.'

I thought, 'What is this?'

But when I got here I realised I was in another country.

At first when I got here, at Heathrow, I got put into a hotel.

I thought that it would be easy to get to know people and have friends but it took two weeks.

I'm not really thinking about the future. For me it is just like each day.

This happened today and I just get on with it.

This building is important to me because when I first came to this country my dad had to come here to try to find a new house for me and my Dad and they were the ones that gave us it. That's why it's mainly important to me and I always pass it on my way to school.

### **Third animation**

I'm Edson, I'm David and this is our story

A long time ago in Guinea Bissau my great grandfather met my great grandmother.

My great grandfather was from Portugal.

My great grandmother was from Guinea Bissau.

One day he went outside to get some fresh air.

They met in the park. 'Ola', 'Ola', com um buon dia.'

Later they went back to Portugal together.

Much later in Portugal my Dad went to buy a sandwich for his lunch.

My Mum came out to go to work and she met my Dad.

She said, [in Portuguese]

He said, 'Hm'.

A few months later they got married.

A few months later my Mum had us, David and Edson, and they went to the hospital.

[babies crying]

My great grandfather died on the same day.

My Dad goes to Angola.



We go to England to visit our Aunty for holidays.

We decided to stay.

Yeah, we are meeting a new world!

When we first came to England for good we said, 'Let's watch Sky' and we settled down.

It was 9 o'clock on Friday and it was wrestling!

-----  
We love our families

That's obvious!

But why The Simpsons?

Because its 30 minutes of family life!

My great grandfather met my great grandmother....

Oh, we've done that! Lets move on.

-----  
We think about food all the time:

burger and chips, chicken and chips, kebab, strogonoff, mugali and sukomowiki [spelling?],  
couscous, enjeera.

[burping]

It will be something disgusting, innit.

I hope its chips

-----  
Education is the key to our lives.

But why Kenny from South Park?

He tries to study but he gets killed!

-----  
We like our friends but we can hate them at the same time.

But what's The Rock doing in there?

He's got loads of fans and even though he doesn't know half of them they are still his  
friends.

We love watching TV 'cos Will Smith's on fire,  
Especially his new single.

-----

When I first came to this country I found television really useful because of my English and I couldn't understand what my friends were talking about at school.

-----

You know people come from foreign countries to England and they don't know what to buy their children?

Yeah, when...

When I came here I got a pink bike! I say...!

Yeah when I came here I bought a Tottenham kit!

[singing]

-----

My great grandma and I think that we should have a Portuguese channel at our flat NOW because if it's the news and its about the war she don't know what's happening but if its Portuguese she knows what's happening.

[singing]

**END**

## **(ii) The girls' group video – Take Four Girls**

### **Introductory sequence**

#### **Group animation**

We all meet up in the playground and these are the games we play: chase, train for children, singing and dancing, girls catch boys, hide and seek or boys catch girls.

Now lets play Sisters and Follow the Yellow Brick Road.

MORWEN: You're our slave so you better do everything we say

NYOTA:: Here's ten quid, not.

JUBA: You better not mess up, or else!

MORWEN: We're going to the market and we're gonna buy some new clothes.

TOGETHER: And we're gonna bring you the bill for them!

RHAXMA: I wish my sisters were kind.  
I'm gonna go and mess up the bed. I'll show them!

MORWEN: The market was brilliant. You really should have come, oops. I forgot you had some work to do.

NYOTA: What! What have you done?

JUBA: All the beds are messed up

RHAXMA: It was a burglar.

NYOTA: Yeah, alright! We don't believe you!

TOGETHER: Let's get her!

RHAXMA: Ouch, stop it! Ow, my hair! Help.

JUBA: Right, that's over with.

RHAXMA: I've had enough. I'm going to escape.

NYOTA: That's it. Let's play Following the Yellow Brick Road.

[singing]

ALL: It ain't orange, it ain't blue, its yellow and its just for you  
BYE!

-----

MORWEN: Shania Twain, and Ricky Martin, Jennifer Lopez, Whitney Houston, Robbie Williams, TLC.

INT: How do you know about all these?

MORWEN: Its on MTV. Like my mum and my dad and my sister and me have never heard of any other channels apart from Nickelodeon, MTV and Sky 1.

-----

NYOTA: Back Street Boys, yeah. My sister put Back Street Boys all over the room, yeah

RHAXMA: Yeah, I saw her room

NYOTA: When?

RHAXMA: Remember when I came to your house?

NYOTA: No, I've changed it now. It's not Spice Girls anymore. I have Back Street Boys now.

MORWEN: Rhaxma, all she talks about is music and TV

NYOTA: But what I'm into is singing. singing and dancing, singing and dancing.

**Nyota's (Ntumba's drawing**

INT: So what's this picture about?

NYOTA: It's the important things in my life

INT: And what are those?

NYOTA: There's me and there's my family, the most important thing and my teddy and my garden.

INT: Do you have a garden now?

NYOTA: No I used to have a garden when I lived at my old house. Not at my new house. And I want to have a garden now. But I have a balcony so I can't. And my fish, yeah. I've named it Vikky and Ricky 'cos it's a boy and girl and my friends.

**Nyota's animation**

This is me when I came to London. I was three years old.

The people in Zaire carrying bowls of food and water on their heads. I saw this on TV. And my Mum brought me to London because some bad things happened in Zaire.

When I first came to Priory Hill House I was surprised because there were loads of doors.

This is me when I am a bit older and Wilma my sister gets born. My Mum took a photo of me 'cos I'm a bit bigger.

This is me when I first met my friends. I liked them cos they were kind to me.

This is me now and I know a little bit about my country. I've enjoyed my school.

Me and my parents often watch WWF.

This is my living room and this is where I watch TV.

This is my bedroom and when I come back from school I take my school uniform off and I sit on my bed and I watch CITV and whatever is on the TV that I like to watch and I have a Barbie duvet and a Barbie cushion.

Bye, and this is how you say bye in French, Au revoir so, 'Au revoir'.

-----

### **Nyota talking about her poster**

What my Dad likes, yeah. My dad likes watching sport and French channel and football and Sky 1.

My dad likes anything that I don't like.

My Mum likes watching French channel and Jerry Springer.

I think they like watching French Channel because they speak French.

-----

### **Interview clip with Morwen.**

INT: Who do you talk to about television?

MORWEN: Rhaxma and George

INT: Why do you think Rhaxma talks so much about television?

MORWEN: Cos she's sort of into the same things as me and her Mum most probably isn't like my Mum watching MTV every blah blah blah

-----

### **Interview clip with Rhaxma.**

INT: Which ones does your Mummy like?

RHAXMA: [pointing to her poster]

INT: Blind Date? Anything Else?

RHAXMA: [pointing to her poster]

INT: And what about your dad?

RHAXMA: [pointing]

-----

NYOTA: The news, yeah. It's nice but I don't like it. I know its important but I don't like it

RHAXMA: I just like to watch it and find out but sometimes its scary. When people die it scares me.

NYOTA: people die – oh its coming off.

RHAXMA: That's what I hate about news, dying

NYOTA: No, its crap. I think its crap.

-----

### **Rhaxma's drawing**

RHAXMA: These are the things that are important to me

INT: So you've got. What have you got there?

RHAXMA: Family, friends, food, bed, and Qur'an.

### **Rhaxma's animation**

I was born in Somalia. I am wearing pyjamas

Somalia is a big country.

I came to England.

Who did you come to England with?

My Mum.

I came to nursery.

I came to Horton School.

This is me with Morgana and Nicole.

I go to mosque twice a week with my cousin.

This is my living room.

This is my Mum and the babies.

My mum's watching Italian soap.

This is my bedroom and I'm with my brother and sister.

My brother is screaming.

What are you doing?

Covering my ears.

I'm watching Power Puff Girls. Bye.

Assalaam Alaikum

-----

### **Interview clip with Rhaxma.**

INT: Do you talk to your friends about mosque and things?

RHAXMA: Not a lot.

INT: Why is that?

RHAXMA: I don't think they're interested. I talk to everyone about TV.

INT: Do you? Why?

RHAXMA: At maths I was just talking to Morwen about this film I asked her if she watched it and George came past and said, 'I watched it. It was good wasn't it.'

-----

### **Interview clips with Morwen.**

MORWEN: I like South Park but not the rude words. This is Kenny. He dies in every episode.

INT: Is that funny?

MORWEN: Yeah, 'cos he has um he always wears this orange coat with a hood and he looks like a hair dryer when he's standing up and then after every time he talks, you can't hear what he says, its brbrbrbtr, ..... he dies and when he dies the rats eat his eyes.

INT: And that's funny.

-----

MORWEN: In the magazine it says um that South Park, to all South Park lovers and its two whole pages about South Park and its got questions like, do your parents know that you watch it and 69% said No.

-----

MORWEN: Sometimes I wish I had Sky in my room so I could just wake up on Saturday, turn on to Sky 1 at 11 o'clock and watch wrestling.

-----

### **Morwen's (Morgana) animation**

These are the most important things in my life. They are family, my food, my toys, nature, my friends and my animals.

Well, this is my living room and in my living room I've got my telly and my stereo and I've got a video in there and on the telly its like all my family have ever heard of is MTV, Nickelodeon and Sky 1.

In my bedroom I've got my telly, my video, my radio and my Play Station. Most of my personal stuff is in there but come to think of it I haven't really got that much personal stuff 'cos all my family knows what I get anyway.

Goodbye..

## **Juba's (Jade) animation**

Hello, I'm Jade.

These are the most important things in my life; my family, my TV, my bed, my aunties, my uncles. I've not got an animal yet but I want one NOW! That's all.

This was me when I was a baby.

My parents come from Ghana. My parents have told me about it.

This is a pitch in Ghana. It's bigger than any pitch in the world and my Dad has played on it. I hate football.

My Mum has told me about the sea. There is millions of fishes and sharks and some of them are dangerous.

In Africa there were some floods and people got out of their homes 'cos all their things got wrecked and I heard about it on TV.

This is my home. This is my kitchen. This is my living room. Here's my couch, my Mum and Dad, my TV and my remote.

In my bedroom I like to play my Play Station.

Bye.

-----

sequences of them going home after school.

**END**



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The videos referred to in this thesis may be viewed on written application to Professor David Buckingham, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC10AL.